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Essays in Memory of Elizabeth Salter

Edited by
DEREK PEARSALL

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EDITORIAL NOTE

This volume of *Leeds Studies in English* is a collection of essays in memory of Elizabeth Salter, Professor of English and founder and Co-Director of the Centre for Medieval Studies at the University of York, who died in 1980. Throughout her career at York she remained on the closest and friendliest terms with medievalists at the University of Leeds, adding to them from time to time with the postgraduate students she had trained at York, and it is appropriate that this memorial volume should appear under the imprint of a University which is closest to York in more ways than one. The contributors are a mixed group of distinguished elders and contemporaries from both sides of the Atlantic, along with former students, both from Cambridge and York. There are many more than those represented here who would wish Elizabeth Salter's life and work to be remembered in this way.

I would like to express my thanks to all those who have helped in bringing this volume of essays to completion and publication, and particularly to the Editorial Committee of *Leeds Studies in English*, whose kindness and cooperation I have much appreciated. A contribution from the F.R. Leavis Fund, which is administered by a committee of the Board of Studies for English and Related Literature at the University of York, has helped with the costs of publication, and I should like to thank the Committee for making this money available.

Derek Pearsall

ELIZABETH SALTER
A MEMOIR

By PROFESSOR DEREK PEARSALL
Centre for Medieval Studies, University of York

Elizabeth Salter was born Elizabeth Jones in 1925, in the village of Bream, in the Forest of Dean, where her mother was the village schoolmistress. She received her secondary education at the grammar school in nearby Lydney, and went up to Bedford College, in the University of London, in 1943. The College was partly evacuated to Cambridge during the war, and she spent one of her undergraduate years there. After receiving her B.A. degree, with 1st class honours, she went on to do research for the M.A. under the supervision of Phyllis Hodgson. Her subject was the English prose translation by Nicholas Love of the pseudo-Bonaventuran *Meditationes Vitae Christi*. Material derived from and inspired by her dissertation constituted the basis of her journal publication during the early years of her scholarly career, and the whole dissertation was eventually published in revised form in 1974. In 1949 she was appointed to an Assistant Lectureship at King's College in the University of London, and at this time she also held a part-time appointment at Westfield College.

In 1950 she married Christopher Zeeman and removed to Cambridge. Here she held Research Fellowships at Girton College and at Newnham College, was appointed Assistant Lecturer in the University of Cambridge in 1953, and Lecturer in 1957. After her divorce from her first husband she married David Salter in 1960.

During her years in Cambridge, Elizabeth Zeeman contributed very significantly to the development of medieval English studies in the University, through the energy and determination of her work on faculty committees, through her unrivalled brilliance as a lecturer, and her own example as a scholar. She was at this time developing the ideas on Langland and Chaucer which subsequently found expression in her books on *Piers Plowman* and on the *Knight's Tale* and *Clerk's Tale* in 1962. These books first established her as a scholar of international reputation: deeply sensitive to the writing of the two great poets, and exquisitely literate, they also embody a view of the work of literature as the writer's creative engagement with the intractable matter of his experience which is both profoundly original and profoundly stimulating.

In 1963, Elizabeth Salter accepted a visiting appointment at the University of Connecticut at Storrs. In 1964 she returned to take up a Readership at the newly established University of York. To this new and challenging task she brought all her strength of mind and enthusiasm, all her wit and charm, and the high reputation of the growing department of English at York owed much to her inspired teaching. In 1969 she was appointed to a Chair, and she

was the effective moving force behind the creation of the post-graduate Centre for Medieval Studies in the University of York, of which she was appointed the first Director in 1972. These years saw the publication of a number of articles and books, especially on Chaucer and alliterative poetry, and the establishment, in collaboration with Derek Pearsall, her colleague at York, of the series of *York Medieval Texts*. They also saw the maturing of her work on the relationships between medieval literature and the visual arts. Her lectures on this subject were perhaps the pinnacle of her achievement as a teacher, and the memory of them, for anyone who was privileged to be present, whether at Cambridge, York, or at universities or conferences elsewhere in England or abroad, is unforgettable. Her radiant personal beauty and spontaneous warmth of personality, no less than the challenge of her ideas and the deftness of her presentation, combined to create an irresistible impression.

It was during this time too that there was brought to full fruition perhaps her greatest and rarest talent, as a supervisor of postgraduate research. Her name and her reputation brought students from all over England and the world to work with her and her closest colleagues, and the impress of her personality and her scholarship will remain with them wherever they are now scattered in universities at home and abroad. For, combined with her brilliance, even flamboyance, as a lecturer, and her sensitivity as a writer and critic, she was also a meticulous scholar, modest, respectful to her forebears, zealous for the truth and unremitting in her pursuit of it. She communicated this dedication in full measure to her students, and was almost wantonly generous in giving them the results of her own researches. She thought only of the community of scholars and the pursuit of truth, and never of gain to her own personal reputation. Her extraordinary warmth of personality, her spontaneous care and considerateness of others, her generosity of nature, made a bond among all who surrounded her, just as her alarming attractiveness and scandalous gaiety made every meeting seem like the occasion for a party. She was patient where patience was needed, and she had the gift of creating an atmosphere of encouragement, so that all the students that she gathered around her could feel that they had something important to say. Many talents bloomed to an unexpected maturity in the warmth of her approbation.

In 1978, Elizabeth Salter returned to Storrs to accept an appointment as distinguished visiting professor. She always loved America, and had many friends among Americans, to whose natural openness of manner, friendliness, and frank hospitality she responded warmly. All this time, she maintained an unprecedented flow of publication, as if aware that she had little time left. A series of essays and articles, each with enough ideas to supply a book, distilled the scholarly experience of a lifetime. She was also engaged in the writing of a major book, on the contexts, especially the non-English contexts, of Middle English literature, and in the preparation of a collection of studies on literature and the visual arts. Her friends hope to bring these to publication.

Elizabeth Salter died on May 7th, 1980, eighteen months after her first operation for cancer.

PIERS PLOWMAN AND PROBLEMS IN THE PERCEPTION OF POVERTY: A CULTURE IN TRANSITION

By DAVID AERS

I wish to dedicate this essay to the memory of Elizabeth Salter, outstanding medievalist and most generous of teachers and friends: this piece of work originated in the last discussions I had with her before her tragic, early death in 1980.

The chief aim of this essay is to increase our understanding of *Piers Plowman* and its author's problems by focussing on a set of his preoccupations which can be loosely grouped under the heading "problems of poverty". These preoccupations demand a movement between attention to the text, its historical moment, and long term cultural changes in which Langland participated. His discourse, as I have argued before, is fundamentally exploratory, one in which conclusions are risked, tested out, and often shown to be premature, one-sided or mistaken; assumptions made, brought to light and later rejected or developed in fresh perspectives.[1] The poem's modes of writing and organisation are essential to the ways in which Langland remains open to diverse and opposed ideological tendencies in late medieval England. So the specificity of the text's "minute particulars" and its movements must be respected. Yet to grasp the meaning of his treatment of the materials he is working into his poem, such as his treatment of poverty and related issues, we have to attempt to activate for ourselves the contexts within which his discussion moves. For any remotely adequate understanding of Langland's particular meanings will involve at least some recovery of the forms in which he encountered the problems and materials which obsess him. The critic's task is thus far from simple and really demands a supersession of certain divisions of "discipline" in our educational institutions - between, for instance, specialists in social history, history of ideas, economic history, discourse analysis of the kind being developed by Gunther Kress and Roger Fowler, literary criticism. Perhaps the ideal here would be more collaborative work, more collaborative projects. Certainly, I am especially conscious of the way in which the problems I am currently addressing would be best faced in such collaboration, and have read with admiration, and drawn heavily on, the work currently being done on attitudes to the poor and poverty by such continental historians as Geremek, Lis and Soly, Mollat and Schmitt.[2] Attitudes to the poor and ideologies concerning poverty provide major insights into the mentalities prevalent in particular societies and offer a significant record of important social and cultural transitions.

I

Before discussing *Piers Plowman* I will attempt to outline the contexts within which Langland's treatment of poverty (and related issues) moves, and within which its implications emerge. First, I will offer an inevitably schematised account of what I call "traditional" attitudes to poverty and the poor, that is, "traditional" by the time Langland was writing. Then I shall sketch what I call the "newer" ethos evolving during the later Middle Ages, in pre-Protestant Europe. It is important to recall that in Langland's world both "traditional" and "newer" forms, however contradictory, were alive and part of a historical process whose outcome had obviously not been revealed to contemporary human beings.

In the "traditional" ethos riches are viewed with grave suspicion, even by the possessing classes who simultaneously enjoyed and defended their wealth. Henry of Lancaster's confessions in his *Livre de Seyntz Medecines* are a good and easily accessible example of this, and Jesus himself, of course, gave the rich plenty of cause for guilt and massive anxiety concerning their prospects of salvation - "It is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter into the Kingdom of God."[3] In traditional thought poverty is neither a vice nor the product of God's special disfavour. If the poor accept their poverty they are in a virtuous, holy state created by God, one which not only guarantees the salvation of the poor but provides a vital instrument in the rich man's bid for salvation through charity - not an inconvenient set of ideas for the "traditional" possessing classes, of course.[4] But developments in Christian piety, culminating in St Francis, had gone beyond this position to maintain that absolute poverty is the very hallmark of Christ, the apostles and his contemporary manifestation. To St Francis any poor man, even an idle beggar, bears the special merits of the poor and stands for Christ - hence his attempt to approach the poorest not as condescending donor but through a shared way of life - "Let them [the friars] be happy to associate with humble and insignificant people, the poor and the weak, the sick, the lepers, and the beggars on the roads."[5] As for work in "traditional" orthodoxy, it was commanded to fallen men by God (Genesis 3.19) and its ends were to avoid idleness, to provide self-discipline and to procure necessities. Prayer, liturgical activities, spiritual works in general were habitually seen as achieving the ends of work in a higher mode than direct activity in the basic processes of material production and exchange. And framing the tradition were the utopian demands of Jesus we shall find Langland turning to at a decisive moment in *Piers Plowman*: "be not solicitous for your life, what you shall eat, nor for your body, what you shall put on. Is not the life more than the meat and the body more than the raiment? Behold the birds of the air, for they neither sow, nor do they reap nor gather into barns: and your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are not you of much more value than them?" (Matt. 6.25-6).[6]

Because the issue of "beggars" and the able-bodied poor allegedly reluctant to work was to become so important from at

least 1300 to the 1834 Poor Law, and was already proving highly perplexing to Langland, I will exemplify what I take as a "traditional" position. It had been lucidly formulated by Clement of Alexandria (who died before 215) in a work on *The Rich Man's Salvation* (the key *difficulty* in "traditional" commentary on such matters). Writing in an urban milieu, he gives his view on whether the Christians with possessions should evolve a discriminatory charity:

> Do not yourself decide who is worthy and who unworthy, for you may happen to be quite mistaken in your opinion; so that when in doubt it is better to do good even to the unworthy for the sake of the worthy than by being on your guard against the less good not to light upon the virtuous at all. For by being niggardly and by pretending to test who will deserve the benefit and who will not, you may possibly neglect some who are beloved of God, the penalty for which is eternal punishment by fire.[7]

This accords rather well with the attitude expressed by Jesus: "Give to every one that asketh thee: and of him that taketh away thy goods, ask them not again" (Luke 6.30) - an attitude of unconditional generosity. Nor was it absent from disputes on poverty, begging and almsgiving in Langland's period. For example, it can be found in Richard of Maidstone's *Protectorium Pauperis* (1380), a Carmelite friar's response to the newer Christian ethos I shall describe in a moment. Richard notes the relevance of Jesus's command in Luke 6 and observes that it is a sin even to complain about beggars, warning against scrupulous inquiry into the exact position of beggars. Such prying, he maintains, is diabolic arrogance, lessens the merit of giving and imposes a trial on the recipient - one of the deliberate aims of discriminatory almsgiving in the newer ethos, of course. Christ did not, he points out, exclude sinful people from alms.[8] But Richard was primarily concerned to defend his own vocation of voluntary poverty and he is conscious that "traditional" positions here were likely to meet intense hostility. Was it now the salvation of the poor that might need sustained defence rather than the salvation of the rich?

The emerging "new" ethos shows signs that orthodox Christian ideology was shifting to embrace changing attitudes to wealth. Perhaps some of the most obviously striking texts are the ridicule of poverty and glorification of the affluence and occupation of Florentine merchants by some early fifteenth century humanists, Poggio's *On Avarice and Luxury*, Palmieri's *The Civic Life* and Alberti's *The Family*, for example.[9] Less blatant, but perhaps more significant, are the assumptions behind Pope John XXII's attack on the Franciscan ideas about poverty, and FitzRalph's polemics, exactly contemporary with Langland. In the Bulls *Ad conditorem canonum* (1323), *Cum internonnullos* (1323), *Quia quorumdam mentes* (1324) and the longer, confirmatory *Quia vir reprobus* (1329) John made the renunciation of possessions absolutely irrelevant to the

highest form of Christian life. Despite the concentration on legal arguments (as those over *ius utendi* and *usus facti*) John clearly upgrades the valuation of possessions, property and dominion. God himself instituted property and dominion ("non commune") in paradise, before the fall, and himself instituted private property before any human legislator. John denied the traditional claim that "abdicatio proprietatis et dominii sollicitudinem excludit", pointing with some justice at the state of the Franciscan order. And he argued that the incarnate Christ held legal rights, dominion over temporal goods, and possessions (Judas's bag, for instance).[10] Gordon Leff's summarising comments are very much to the point:

> The virtues of material poverty were brushed aside as irrelevant to evangelical perfection . . . With *Quia vir reprobus* the Pope's *volte face* from his predecessors' sanctification of poverty to his own glorification of property was complete . . . Lordship not renunciation was the badge of the apostolic life.[11]

Richard FitzRalph, in Trevisa's translation of *Defensio curatorum*, goes beyond John in drawing out the implications of such arguments. Like the condemned William of St Amour, and John XXII, he treats material need as a main temptation to sin, claims that Christ himself never had the need to beg, and identifies perfection and possessions, emphasising that "prestes þat schulde be most parfite of life, schulde haue possessiouns". In Paradise FitzRalph finds evidence that God favours possessions and wealth, "plente of good, & catel, meble and vnmeble". Poverty, not property, is the product of the fall and sin ("pouert is þe effect of synne"), whereas: "riches is good hauyng & worþi to be loued of God, for he is richest of alle, & pouert is contrarie & ys priuacioun of riches". The conclusion is, "þanne pouert is euel".[12]

FitzRalph also seems to show at least some signs of what looks like a new work-ethic in which the production of material goods, material work, seems to become glorified as an end in itself. His version of Eden involves an attitude to work more usually associated with the Protestant epic *Paradise Lost* than with medieval, Catholic priests:

> in þe first ordynaunce of man God ordeyned hym so þat anoon as man was made, God put hym in Paradys for he schuld worche & kepe Paradys; so hit is writen in þe begynnyng of Hooly Writ. Hit semeþ me þat þere God tauȝt þat bodilich werk, possessioun and plente of riches & vnmebles, & warde & keping þereof for mannes vse, schuld be sette to-fore beggerie; for god sett man in Paradys for he schuld worche. For man schuld kepe paradys as his owne & haue þere plente of good, & catel, meble & vnmeble . . . .[13]

Disciplined work for the accumulation of "worldli goodes" is so pleasing to God that it will even be rewarded among the reprobate. While systematic study of the precise contexts, nature and incidence of the emergence of this ethos in the later Middle Ages is still much needed, its presence is indisputable, as the recent work of continental historians like J.-C Schmitt makes plain enough.[14]

It is hardly surprising that in such an ethos attitudes to the poor should undergo change in the directions revealed by Mollat, Schmitt and the scholars mentioned previously. The period which was witnessing a "desacralisation" of poverty saw increasing numbers of wandering labourers and paupers, the creation of changing economic circumstances and structures.[15] Ruling groups seem to have responded to this situation with hostility and fear, lumping together all those not obviously physically disabled as able-bodied beggars. The problem for the possessing classes became to do just what Richard of Maidstone was still calling sinful and diabolic arrogance: to draw a simple division between the "deserving" poor who should receive alms and the "undeserving" poor who should be treated as a threat to public order and production, subjected to the controls of an embryonic social security police. The conflicts here were related to those between employers and labourers over wages, as testified by the many ordinances attempting to freeze wages *and* prevent social mobility (which could benefit labourers against employers' economic interests), in different countries and towns through western Europe from the middle of the fourteenth century.[16] Once again FitzRalph expresses the newer ethos in his *Defensio Curatorum*:

> Holy Write seiþ þat þe pore schal be hated of his neiȝbore. [Proverbs 14.20]; miche more a begger schal be hated of his neiȝbore . . . for skilfullich euereche man schal raþer help hym-silf þan anoþer.

This would have surprised St Francis and most "traditional" Christian moralists, but FitzRalph is unembarrassed. He even turns Christ's demand that those with possessions should feast not well-to-do neighbours and friends but the poor (Luke 14.12-14) into a lesson from Jesus on the need to draw a clear cut distinction between "deserving" and "undeserving" poor - "pore men þat beþ stalworþe and stronge schulde nouȝt be cleped to þe feeste of beggers, for þei mowe quyte hit wiþ her trauail".[17] A reading of the New Testament congenial to the "new" ethos is being forged. And it is in this context, one which included both Richard of Maidstone and Richard FitzRalph, that Langland encountered what was now the *problem* of the poor.

II

I will begin this discussion of *Piers Plowman* with a group Langland introduces at the beginning of his poem, one he calls "wasters" and "beggars" (Pr. 20-2, 40-5).[18] On their first

appearance these terms are used to depict able-bodied people who refuse to join those who worked "ful harde" and played very rarely (Pr. 20-2), choosing instead to become wandering beggars. Langland presents such beggars not only as acting out of a perfectly free choice but as prospering materially through their begging, inhabiting pubs and willing to supplement their income by theft (Pr. 40-5). It is in this perspective that Langland has us meet the *bête noire* of law-and-order propagandists of the later fourteenth century, as of the sixteenth century - the able-bodied beggar as a demonic antithesis of the "new" ethos discussed above, the sinner who rejects the discipline of obediently productive work and its ethos. Langland's text does provoke at least one question here: in a society which according to his own account[19] is led by thoroughly ungenerous possessing classes, who actually contributes with such unconditional generosity to these hordes of gluttonous vagrants jollying it up around his England? Langland's reticence here may prove to involve a rather uncritical readiness to impose an increasingly fashionable stereotype on to a disturbing phenomenon mentioned earlier - the increasing numbers of landless, mobile lower class people no longer incorporated into traditional rural or urban social organisation. One should ask here whether Langland was substituting ideological stereotype for imaginative engagement and conceptual distinctions which might enable someone to distinguish between diverse causes pushing able-bodied people on to the roads and into mendicancy.[20] I think, in his own dogged way, Langland came to recognise the relevance of such questions to his project, as we shall see in due course.

After the Prologue Langland reveals a world permeated by market relations and antagonistic to his own most firmly held convictions.[21] As soon as he tries to imagine a reformation of this world (IV. 171-VI. 320) he faces the issue of work and "wasters", raised explicitly by Reason (V. 24-5, 33), who assumes that able-bodied indigent people (typically labelled "wastour") must be malicious and should be beaten if they do not "reform". This assumption is developed during the famous passage on the deadly sins in his world, as once more Langland associates these groups with pubs and gluttony (Pr. 22-3, 40-3: V. 298-356, 376-7). Langland figures Glutton and his companions exclusively through labourers and artisans (cobblers, warrener, tinker, tinker's knaves, servants, road sweepers, diggers, rat-catchers, rope-makers, dish-seller), with one clerk from the local church, and the location is the pub. As I have already remarked, Langland's view of the possessing classes was not a flattering one, but I think that at this point his vision only notices lower class people because his attention is as much on work as on distinctly religious conversion. The brewers' drinking place represents a milieu in which the desublimation of the high-culture and its discourses takes place, in which an alternative service to those of the official religion is created:

> There was lauȝynge and lourynge and "Lat go þe cuppe!"
> Bargaynes and beuerages bigonne to arise,
> And seten so til euensong and songen vmwhile
> Til Gloton hadde yglubbed a galon and a gille.

> Hise guttes bigonne to goþelen as two gredy sowes;
> He pissed a potel in a paternoster while,
> And blew þe rounde ruwet [horn] at þe ruggebones ende
> That alle þat herde þat horn helde hir nose after
> (V. 336-43)

Obviously enough, the farting here contrasts with Hope's "horn of *Deus tu conuersus viuificabis nos*" (see V. 506-7), and the singing in the pub contrasts with the saints' singing later in the Passus (V. 508-9). The contrast is doubtless what critics conventionally classify as satire, directed against base and irreligious plebeians. Quite so. But the poetry simultaneously sets up something other than the official culture's straightforward scheme of condemnatory judgement, a feature generally evaded in the classification "satire". The text includes the projections of a bodily, profane counter-culture in which pissing and vomiting directly comment on the official culture's "*euensong*" and "*paternoster*", just as later in the Passus "tales" and "rymes of Robyn Hood" replace holy-days and fast-days of the Church (V. 376-7, 395-6, 402, 404).

I think Langland's writing about the favoured location of "wasters" and "beggars", in the Prologue, increases our understanding of the function served by the category "waste" in his milieu. "Wasters" resist the pieties of the official culture, they desublimate its most exalted ideals in blasphemous parody, and, crime of all crimes, they are allegedly antagonistic to any work ethos supported by employers.

Langland decides to develop his engagement with this nexus of problems in Passus VI. There the Christian ploughman, perhaps a proto-yeoman emerging from an increasingly stratified village society, sets about organising the material production, allegedly within the traditional tripartite, organic ideology cherished by the poet. I have recently written about the breakdown of Piers's enterprise and the multiplicity of meanings this has for Langland's favoured ideology, and here I want to focus on one aspect of this breakdown, the problems, to use Langland's terms, of wasters, bold, big beggars, and the unfortunate needy.[22]

The context of these terms is the ploughman's alliance with the knight against "wasters". Who exactly are these "wasters" here? Most explicit is who they are *not*: they are not the subservient "pouere men" who offer the knight presents for just dealing (bribes, Piers makes clear, VI. 37-44); they are *not* the impotent disabled; and they are *not* workmen who work flat out "to plese Perkyn the plowman" and who will be rewarded with employment in "heruest tyme" (VI. 107-14). They are, in fact, those workmen who after an initial burst of labour withdraw to the alehouse and "holpen ere þe half acre wiþ 'how trolly lolly'." (VI. 115). They are thus people who reject labour discipline and any form of regular work ethic, people for whom work is no more than a means to acquire wages for immediate enjoyment of material comforts offered in the pub. Langland's response is to have an angry Piers warn them that when they are in need they will be starved to death - unlike the obedient workers these will doubtless not be "hired þerafter" (VI. 117-20, 114).

According to Tierney's account of canon law, this goes beyond its teachings, and it seems that Langland's imaginative engagement with problems of production relationships in his society pushes him and his ploughman towards the "new" ethos concerning work and poverty. It is thus hardly surprising that immediately after the Ploughman's angry warning the poet presents another example of the classic stereotypes of the increasing groups of vagrants in later medieval Europe. The writer shows them all as frauds pretending to be the "deserving" poor but unambiguously work-shy scroungers (to use a characteristic term from the fully-fledged ethos, now not so new). Interestingly enough, Langland presents *these* groups as appealing to the traditional ethos in which mendicant poor have a role as privileged mediators of God's blessings (VI. 121-8). This merely encourages the author to reassert the simple, two-term classification mentioned before - *either* impotent and disabled, in which case "deserving" poor, *or* fraudulent scroungers, able-bodied beggars, wasters, in which case deserving starvation or, as here, most minimal subsistence rations (VI. 130-44). Writing and classifying of this kind encourages readers to restrain openness and sympathy towards able-bodied but indigent people; it encourages the kind of self-righteous suspicion towards them which was condemned by Clement of Alexandria, Richard of Maidstone and others; and it confirms convenient stereotypes which legitimate both the material position of the possessing classes and their hostility to vagrant, "undisciplined" poor. There is, we note again, no attempt to imagine the histories and forms of life of indigents who do not fit the simple dichotomising classification, and this limitation is a sign that at this stage of his poem Langland was moving into the ambience of the "new" ethos.

Langland acknowledges that the ploughman's controls and ethos are fiercely resisted by lower class groups whom he again labels "wasters". These people, who tell Piers "go pissen with his plowȝ", are wage-labourers who experience work as involving a basic conflict of interest between themselves and those who control and own agricultural products and beasts ("þi flour and þi flessh", VI. 152-8). The ploughman calls on the secular elite to impose work discipline, but in Langland's view the "wasters" of the 1370s were getting around the repressive labour legislation (e.g. VI. 168, 317-18), and his only hope becomes one centred on the possibility of a subsistence crisis which would force working people into the kind of disciplined and docile labour force required by Piers and the knightly class (VI. 171-8). In this context questions of "charity" take on obvious economic as well as moral significance. We watch the transformation of traditional charity into a discriminatory instrument of poor relief under lay control (Piers is unequivocally a *layman* in Passus V-VII),[23] an important part of the new ethos and its realisation. Alms-giving had to be adapted to a system demanding a disciplined and reliable work-force which was nevertheless increasingly composed of formally "free" and landless wage labourers. The solution proposed here by Hunger is to allow recalcitrant able bodied people just enough to keep alive, that is, to preserve the work-force - "lat hem ete wiþ hogges" (VI. 181) - but not enough for any independence of the employers. Langland

allows himself the pleasure of imagining the success of this approach as he depicts hungry "wasters", vagrants and the pseudo-disabled immediately turned into fanatically dedicated workers, all content to work for subsistence wages and ready to receive any bonuses with unquestioning gratitude (VI. 183-201). We glimpse a vision of the new work ethos triumphant over rebellious labourers and, so, over all social and economic difficulties. Truly, an employer's utopia!

But Langland was too profoundly wedded to traditional ideology to be happy with this solution. He now has Piers note that the reformed "wasters" actually work solely "for defaute of foode" in totally impersonal and fundamentally antagonistic production relations. This was a state of affairs quite uncongenial to traditional ideology in which, as Piers recalls, *all* people, regardless of their apparent worth,

> are my blody breþeren for god bouȝte vs alle;
> Truþe tauȝte me ones to louen hem ech one
> (VI. 207-8)

He is not sure that the solution centred on hunger and forced labour is compatible with Christ's stance in the gospels. Hunger assures him that it is, using the distinction between "Bolde beggeris" and the impotent, deserving poor (VI. 212-28). Still Piers is not convinced - "Miȝte I synnelees do as þow seist?" (VI. 230). Hunger's reply aims to alleviate such moral anxieties and makes the surprisingly confident claim that,

> The freke þat fedeþ hymself wiþ his feiþful labour
> He is blessed by þe book in body and in soule
> (VI. 251-2)

Theologically this seems crudely pelagian, but what interests me about it here is the unqualified claim it makes for religious salvation through productive labour: orthodox Christianity, we see, was to adapt to the employers' changing needs and ethos.

Langland, however, was sure that wage labourers would continue to resist, and he again presents their outlook as one in which work is solely a means to immediate material enjoyment (VI. 229 ff.). As soon as enough resources for physical gratification are earned the labourers revert to being "wasters", vagrants, beggars and, as bad, aggressive militants who reject the employers' wage offer and wage freezes:

> And þo nolde Wastour noȝt werche, but wandred aboute,
> Ne no beggere ete breed þat benes Inne come,
> . . .
> Laborers þat haue no land to lyue on but hire handes
> Deyneþ noȝt to dyne a day nyȝt olde wortes.
> May no peny ale hem paie, ne no pece of bacoun,
> But if it be fressh flessh ouþer fish yfryed,
> And þat *chaud* and *plus chaud* for chillynge of hir mawe.
> But he be heiȝliche hyred ellis wole he chide;

. . .
He greueþ hym agayn god and gruccheþ ageyn Reson,
And þanne corseþ þe kyng and al þe counseil after
Swiche lawes to loke laborers to chaste.
(VI. 302-18)

Langland attributes the source of rebellion to *landless* labourers, that is, to workers most obviously dependent on market incentives and instabilities, and he presents them as dissociated from any particular community. He also shows that their opposition to the employers and their legislation merges with an opposition to official religion, and that "employers" includes the more powerful peasants such as the supervising ploughman. Furthermore, rightly or wrongly, he shows the rebellion grounded in an individualist, pragmatic consumer's ideology which is worlds apart from the utopian Christian communism attributed by contemporaries to John Ball.[24] Their demands are for the best price they can gain from immediate market circumstances - an outlook as alien to "traditional" ideology as to the newer ethos, but one which was to have a long life before it in working class organizations within capitalist societies. Finally, the passage and its contexts let us see once more how the categories "waster" and "beggar" are evolved as moral ones to be used against those who reject the employers work ethos and interests for their own.

It is hardly surprising that a writer who wished to support traditional versions of social organisation should see market-centred social relations and the contemporary practices of wage labourers as dissolvents of fundamental pieties and forms of life. But there is an irony here. In opposing what he takes to be the subverters of "tradition", the poet attacks lower class reactions to changed circumstances, and he attacks these reactions by deploying a work ethos and moralising vocabulary which is the *employers'* response to new circumstances, a response which will help them to benefit as much as possible from these circumstances. The development of a self-righteous, moralistic language of attack on unemployed and/or mobile working people resistant to employers' terms was one element in the development of an ethos appropriate to capitalist societies. Little could have been further from Langland's overall values than to contribute to the evolution of such an ethos, yet at this point his poem was coming to do so.

Piers's frustration at the problems encountered in social production, a frustration shared with his creator, leads into the long gloss on two lines of the Athanasian creed in Passus VII.[25] During the gloss Piers tries once more to resolve his attitudes to the poorer groups in his world (VII. 61-106, 130-6). The employers' ideal labourers, with their "lowe" hearts and loving devotion to obedient work, present no problem to Piers (61-4), however poor they may be. The problems once again circle round those labelled "beggars". While the position taken up has already been met and discussed, Langland's way of putting the issues here clearly shows that he is drawn to conflicting ideologies. On the one hand there is the "new" Christian ethos, significantly enough represented by the *pagan* Cato: he advocates careful probing into

the motives and means of those seeking material aid (72-5). But on the other hand is the contradictory tradition represented here by St Gregory and St Jerome, one I represented earlier from Clement of Alexandria and Richard of Maidstone:

> Ac Gregory was a good man and bad vs gyuen alle
> That askeþ for his loue þat vs al leneþ:
> *Non eligas cui miserearis ne forte pretereas illum*
> *qui meretur accipere,*
> *Quia incertum est pro quo deo magis placeas.*
> For wite ye neuere who is worþi, ac god woot who haþ nede.
> (VII. 76-8)

This demand for unconditional charity is rooted in Jesus's command at Luke 6.30, but it is profoundly uncongenial to the newer ethos outlined earlier and making its existence felt within *Piers Plowman*. The gloss too shifts from this stark position to the more comfortable pastime of exhorting labourers to be content with minimal subsistence rations and to enjoy reading saints' lives (84-8). This shift leads into an attack on beggars, introduced with the assertion, worthy of FitzRalph, that the Bible "banneþ beggerie", supported by a comic abuse of a line from Psalm 37 (VII. 88). All the generosity and modesty called for in the tradition just represented by Gregory is now brushed aside, as "beggerie" is simplified, stereotyped and assaulted in ways we have encountered earlier in the text and which were to lead an extremely long life in our culture (VII. 90-3):

> For þei lyue in no loue ne no lawe holde.
> Thei wedde no womman þat þei wiþ deele
> But as wilde bestes with wehee worþen vppe and werchen,
> And bryngen forþ barnes þat bastardes men calleþ.

There is no awareness of inadequacies in the accusation that *because* there is more physical deformity among beggars than others it *must* be the effect of malicious self-injury (93-7), nor any imaginative exploration of the concrete situation of "beggars", nor any acknowledgement of the need for more diversified categories than those of big, bad beggars and the deserving, impotent "Blynde and bedreden" poor (VII. 100-6). The tradition represented by Gregory is submerged in the ethos expressed by Cato, and this, I believe, holds for the dominant movement and ideological tendencies of Passus V-VII. Langland had been seriously affected by the newer ethos.

Reasonably enough, there has been considerable commentary on Langland's attitudes to the friars, Adams most recently identifying his position very closely with that of William of St Amour and FitzRalph.[26] But it is worth noting that at this point Langland did not launch into one of his many assaults on contemporary friars. Had he wished to develop the new ethos, one coming to dominate these Passus (V-VII), he could have brought forward a friar to represent traditional defences of mendicancy and charity to able bodied beggars and linked official voluntary poverty with able

bodied "wasters" and demonic beggars (joining William of St Amour, FitzRalph and an increasing number of writers in the later Middle Ages).[27] But Langland did nothing of the sort. Instead he did something antithetical.

He *began* a dramatic disengagement from the newer ethos emerging both in his culture and in his own text. Piers's pardon is exposed as a fantasising gloss on two lines of the creed, and Piers undergoes a religious conversion entailing a major change in orientation "herafter" (VII. 122-5). In self-justification he invokes Jesus's own utopian denunciation of any form of work ethic (Matthew 6. 25-34, Luke 12. 22-31):

> And but if luc lye he lereþ vs anoþer
> By foweles þat are noȝt bisy aboute þe bely ioye;
> *Ne soliciti sitis* he seiþ in þe gospel
> And sheweþ vs by ensample vs selue to wisse.
> The foweles in þe firmament, who fynt hem at wynter?
> When þe frost freseþ fode hem bihoueþ;
> Haue þei no gerner to go to but god fynt hem alle.
> (VII. 129-35)

This is not only a generalised upgrading of the contemplative life, so often discussed by commentators: in context it is a massive retreat from the dominant tendency in the ethos of Passus V-VII. The terms of *that* tendency would positively encourage the followers of Jesus's teaching to be charged with the hackneyed accusation "wasters", "able-bodied beggars", "scroungers". It could provoke a FitzRalphian commentator to recall Pope John XXII's arguments that renunciation of dominion and possessions is the cause of more "solicitude" rather than less, or could even stimulate a counter-exegesis of the gospel texts more in accord with the newer ethos. For example, the famous late medieval preacher Geiler claims that Jesus's utopian words here are actually an *attack* on the idle who will not work. He arrives at this startling interpretation by saying that the birds of the air do all in their power to get food from early morning onwards, and that Jesus is telling men to do likewise, that is to work hard.[28] Far from resorting to such exegetical stratagems, Piers lets Jesus's text stand against his own previous approach, and as his development in the poem conveys plainly enough, his creator sanctioned this move. He did so, in my view, because he grasped that the dominant tendency of Passus V-VII could be promoting an ethos in which productive work and the employers' imposition of labour-discipline was becoming the *official* goal and informing end of human existence. The much abused wage-labourers, wasters or vagrants and the hiring, controlling employer and legislator might actually be wedded in a diabolic unity which foreshadowed the destruction of the traditional ideology Langland wished to perpetuate and impose. Piers's and Langland's retreat is well-motivated, and it is generally sustained for the rest of the poem, though not without some inconsistencies.

The disengagement from the prevailing ethos of Passus V-VII leads into a changed perception of poverty, the poor, and work.

This stimulates some extremely powerful writing in a very different mode to the earlier hostile stereotyping of mendicants, and it can be represented by the following passage:

> For muche murþe is amonges riche, as in mete and cloþyng,
> . . .
> Ac beggeris aboute Midsomer bredlees þei soupe,
> And yet is wynter for hem worse, for weetshoed þei gange,
> Afurst soore and afyngred, and foule yrebuked
> And arated of riche men þat ruþe is to here.
> Now, lord, sende hem somer, and some maner ioye,
> (XIV. 157, 160-4)

There are a number of memorable statements of this kind between Passus X and XV, attributed to different speakers and all carrying the imaginative authority of the poet's most fully engaged work.[29] Without any sentimentalisation they force readers to shift outside the ethos in which able bodied vagrants and beggars are swiftly classified as drunken scroungers or wasters. Such poetry evokes the physical state of miserable indigence and the stigmatisation to which its victims were increasingly subject. Indeed, passages like this challenge the newer ethos and the poet's own stereotyped treatment of vagrants earlier in the poem. For he himself had joined the employers and "foule yrebuked / And arated" the itinerant poor. Here there is no question of a searching means test, nor is there any suggestion that most mendicants are skivers who should be put to work, nor that work is the prime end of existence and the key to human identity or value, nor that the poor are simply instruments through whom the rich can purchase paradise. Such passages constitute a magnificent poetic achievement, a memorial to an outlook that was already being pushed into cultural and political marginality.

The attitudes in such passages are inseparable from Langland's increasing emphasis on the unity of Christ and the poor. Contemporary indigents now become the especial images of Christ in the present. This as noted earlier, is a hallmark of an ethos being superseded in the later Middle Ages. It inspires some of Langland's most passionate utterances:

> For oure Ioye and oure Iuel, Iesu crist of heuene,
> In a pouere mannes apparaille pursueþ vs euere,
> And lokeþ on vs in hir liknesse and þat wiþ louely chere
> To knowen vs by oure kynde herte and castynge of oure eiȝen,
> Wheiþer we loue þe lordes here bifore þe lord of blisse;
> (XI. 185-9)

The verbs' tense here fuses time past and time present in a way which forces the contemporary application of salvation history. This is characteristic of Langland's realisation of central elements in Christian theology, but we should not miss its cultural resonance in the debate on poverty.[30] Langland affirms the unquestioning, unconditional generosity so alien to the newer ethos and to much in the poem's earlier Passus. God is apparently very

much present in history, but not in the employing classes or their work ethos. Langland even reinterprets the Martha and Mary story to make Mary represent not the official contemplative life but the state of poverty which God praises as the better part (XI. 250-5). Little could be more alien to the standpoint represented by FitzRalph.

Indeed, Langland's reaffirmation of what I have labelled "traditional" ethos and ideology has quite obvious affinities with St Francis's distinctive version of Christianity.[31] One recalls how when St Francis found a friar

> abusing some idle beggar who had asked for alms, he rebuked him [the friar] on the grounds that any poor man stood in the place of Christ. He said . . . 'He who curses a poor man, does an injury to Christ, because he bears the noble sign of him who made himself poor for us in this world.'[32]

In Franciscan piety the closest followers of Christ must follow his call to the rich man in Mark 10, renounce all material goods, and, as Piers promises to do in Passus VII, or as Patience and Anima do in Passus XIV and XV, trust in God to provide. Langland's affinities with this tradition, however incompatible with so much in Passus V-VII, are further highlighted by his explicit admiration of absolute, voluntary poverty, the most odious doctrine to William of St Amour, FitzRalph and the propagandists of the "new" ethos. The highest, most meritorious perfection is seen in him who "for goddes loue leueþ al and lyueþ as a beggere", one,

> þat possession forsakeþ
> And put hym to be pacient and pouerte weddeþ,
> The which is sib to god hymself, so neiȝ is pouerte.

The speaker is Patience and certainly not subjected to critical undermining by Langland (see XIV. 258-73). As some commentators have noticed, the poet here seems to invite our recollection of St Francis's marriage to holy poverty as the expression of an ideal state,[33] whereas to William of St Amour, rehabilitated in the newer ethos, such voluntary poverty was a mortal sin, because it encouraged a deviation from justice.[34]

Langland shows signs of self-conscious self-criticism towards his own earlier tendencies in the poem by setting up Haukyn as the questioning antagonist to this Franciscan tradition (XIV. 35, 102-3, 274-5). Haukyn is presented as a follower of the *earlier* Piers, (the Piers of Passus V-VII, before the conversion at the close of Passus VII), and an advocate of hard, productive labour and its exaltation (XIII. 230-46, 250-4, 260-70). Through him Langland shows how thoroughly secularising market energies can be legitimised and glorified. Haukyn is "Actif", a baker and a tradesman, the antithesis of "wasters" and beggars attacked earlier in the poem. He explicitly hates all idleness (XIII. 238), produces commodities essential to the community (XIII. 238-43, 260-70), and earns his

livelihood in the "swete" of his brow (XIII. 260). This ethos, Langland shows, is congruent with a mentality and practice which quite subverts the traditional ideologies he wishes to affirm.[35] In this connection it is significant that by the end of the poem Langland no longer presents the collapse of his cherished social and religious ideals as primarily due to lower class resistance to the legitimate work ethos of pious employers. Instead he carefully attributes the collapse to the demonic development of market energies and relations, especially embodied in small scale commodity producers prepared to *work* regularly and very hard for material benefits. Beggars, even possibly "unjust" beggars, and wasters are now seen as constituting a peripheral problem, and one which must be treated in the light of the most traditional teaching grounded in Jesus's own demands about unconditional generosity (Luke 6.30). The transformed Piers rejects all solutions to contemporary production problems put forward in the new ethos, however attractive they had seemed earlier, and he rejects the increasingly repressive evolution of charity into a self-righteous, disciplinary poor relief (XIX. 434-6).

If I am right in this description of the development of *Piers Plowman*, then what, it may be asked, of the controversial figure of *Need* in Passus XX?[36] My own view is that this confirms Langland's rejection of the "new" ethos that had nearly absorbed his ploughman's vision, and his own. In XX. 4-22 Need berates the author (or the "Will" who purports to be the author) for feeling such shame (abundantly expressed in the poem) at his voluntary dedication to a pursuit of religious understanding and conviction in preference to conventional work in the field of production - guilt at being an able-bodied vagrant. Now Langland uses Need to reaffirm the *rights* of those in need, in contrast to the ethos which advocates prying means tests and a poor relief which is a component of labour-discipline rather than part of the pursuit of holiness and the imitation of Jesus.[37] The glorification of Need at XX. 35-47 is utterly coherent with a major strand in Passus X-XX which we have discussed. There Langland identifies Jesus with the indigent, the contemporary indigent with Jesus, and emphasises that the highest form of Christian life is in a voluntary poverty attempting an imitation of Christ's own voluntary impoverishment. This voluntary poverty is both a theological one, a self-emptying of the deity in identification with humanity, and a social one, a divine identification with the dispossessed. Need then applies this to Will's own career, reassuring him that there is indeed some justification for his own refusal to work so long as he takes no more than he needs for survival - following, in fact, the ascetic path of St Francis and the hermits praised in Passus XV (XX. 9, 11, 48-50).[38]

All this gives us one of the perspectives from which we must assess Langland's criticism of the friars. Instead of collapsing Langland into FitzRalph and William of St Amour, we must give full weight to his praise of voluntary poverty, his celebration of the poor Christ and of St Francis, together with the shift in poetic treatment of beggars indicated above. This helps us see how the late medieval friars are attacked from a stance which is very different to FitzRalph's, however many particular complaints over

abuses are common to Langland, FitzRalph and a satiric anti-mendicant tradition with its roots in William of St Amour.[39] They are *not* attacked for following a mistaken ideal or for misunderstanding Christian doctrine on the respective merits of poverty, riches and dominion, such as that enunciated by John XXII. Far from it, the predominant line of attack after Piers' conversion, as Skeat so long ago noted, is that they are apostates to the traditional valuation of absolute voluntary poverty in the pursuit of holiness and the imitation of Christ.[40] As Need tells Conscience, correctly enough in terms of Langland's vision of the late medieval Church and its friars:

> þei come for coueitise, to haue cure of soules.
> And for þei are pouere, parauenture, for patrymoyne hem failleþ,
> They wol flatere to fare wel folk þat ben riche.
> (XX. 233-5)

Throughout *Piers Plowman*, Langland treats contemporary friars as an essential symptom of the way religion is being absorbed into the cash nexus of the market. Need's mockery in the following lines is again not against voluntary poverty but against these people's travesty of it, a sarcastic reminder of ideals the author cherishes (XX. 236-41). Langland's own solution to this contemporary reality he finds so uncongenial is a *compromise*. He had to acknowledge that in his own culture the ideals of St Francis seem more and more hopelessly anachronistic, the vision of the pauperised Christ, present in the contemporary indigent, waning and even directly challenged.[41] In the spirit of compromise with intractable social reality he advocates that modern friars be given "a fynding". This, he claims, might dissuade them from treating the sacrament of penance as a commodity for exchange in the market. Langland's point is that modern friars do not have the spiritual commitment to endure genuine material need and the rigours of an imitation of Christ which would indeed involve destitution. This is not an ideal solution for Langland, but the best he can hope for given his sense that the friars are profoundly incorporated in the market, in a manner that is antithetical to St Francis's own extreme hatred of all commercial relations. As I have argued elsewhere he presents friars as especially dynamic agents in the urban economy, a group embodying the absorption of religion into a world increasingly moulded by market relations and the ethos of the market: in this presentation, it seems that he was neither incorrect nor idiosyncratic.

This almost concludes my assessment of the overall treatment of poverty and related issues in *Piers Plowman*. I just wish to make two further points. The first is that while I believe this essay demonstrates a decisive ideological rupture at the end of Passus VII, with regard to the subject under discussion there are signs that Langland still wavered. For example, in Passus XII Imaginatif announces that Jesus was not born in a beggar's cottage but "in a Burgeises place, of Bethlem þe beste" (XII. 146-7). This might be taken as a sanctifying glorification of wealthy and

bourgeois property, Imaginatif correcting the neo-Franciscan voices in the poem and pushing towards the "new" ethos. But in fact even Imaginatif does *not* sustain this stance. Instead he treats possessions as "combraunce" and supports the critique of the rich expressed so powerfully in Passus X and XIV (XII. 45, 151-4, 238-68). If a passage like this represents an inconsistency after the end of Passus VII I think its grounds are not obscure. Langland, as we saw, had been strongly drawn towards the "new" ethos when he addressed himself directly to the crisis in contemporary relations of material production in Passus V-VII, and it would hardly be surprising if despite self-criticism on that score there should still be occasional manifestations of that ethos, increasingly prevalent in late medieval culture.[42]

The final point I wish to make is that *Piers Plowman* actually conveys the doomed, anachronistic nature of the neo-Franciscan attitudes Langland revivifies and cherishes after the ploughing episode in Passus VI-VII. This is not only done by presenting contemporary friars as incorrigibly incorporated in urban and mercantile life. Certain vital evasions which I discussed in *Chaucer, Langland and the Creative Imagination* contribute to this effect. Langland's committed and often powerful poetic revitalisation of traditional ethos towards poverty and related issues continually dissolves the drastic social and economic problems so disturbing to him, his contemporaries, and, indeed, to his own poem. In the recent book just mentioned I illustrated this process from the treatment of patient poverty in Passus XIV and XV, and there is no need to repeat the case I made there. The relevant point about that case here is that the poetry shows us how Langland's passionate recreation of traditional and Franciscan ethos in these areas constantly leads to an imaginative *withdrawal* from the field of material production at the basis of all human spiritual life as of all human relations. He may now attack Haukyn's work ethos, penetrating its ultimately irreligious tendencies, and he may now exalt voluntary poverty, the itinerant poor and the image of Christ the pauper. But he cannot poetically embody, or even imagine, an alternative *social* and ecclesiastical order to the dynamic market society and culture he realises so impressively in *Piers Plowman*, a culture antithetical to his most cherished values but, as we saw, one which had also profoundly affected his own consciousness and his great work.

NOTES

1 D. Aers, *Piers Plowman and Christian Allegory* (London, 1975) chapter 5, and D. Aers, *Chaucer, Langland and the Creative Imagination* (London, 1980) chapters 1-3.

2 B. Geremek, "La lutte contre le vagabondage à Paris aux XIVe et XVe siècles", in *Ricerche storiche ed economiche in memoria di Conrado Barbagallo* (volume 2, Naples, 1970) pp.211-36; C. Lis and H. Soly, *Poverty and Capitalism in Pre-Industrial Europe* (London, 1979) chapters 1-3; *Études sur l'histoire de la pauvreté jusqu'au XVIe s.*, ed. M. Mollat, 2 vols. (Paris, 1974); M. Mollat, *Les Pauvres Au Moyen Age* (Paris, 1978); J-C. Schmitt, *Mort d'une hérésie* (Hague, 1978).

3 Ed. E.J. Arnold (Oxford, 1940): the gospel text quoted here is Mark x, 25. See D.L. Mealand, *Poverty and Expectation in the Gospels* (London, 1980), esp. chapters 3 and 4.

4 Commonplace enough - good examples from Bishop Brinton in G.R. Owst, *Literature and Pulpit* (2nd ed. revised, Oxford, 1966) pp.560-1 (see chapters 6 and 9 *passim*).

5 Translated in L.D. Sherley-Price, *St. Francis of Assisi: his life and writings* (London, 1959) p.212; see M.D. Lambert, *Franciscan Poverty* (London, 1961).

6 See too Luke xii, 22-4.

7 *The Rich Man's Salvation* in *Clement of Alexandria*, ed. and tr. G.W. Butterworth (Cambridge, Mass., 1968) pp.260-367, here 341: see too M. Hengel, *Property and Riches in the Early Church* (London, 1974).

8 In his indispensable study of canonical theory Brian Tierney shows this attitude is *one* strand, preserved by way of St John Chrysostom's attack on discrimination, in competition with another favouring discrimination: *Medieval Poor Law* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1959) pp.54-9. Richard of Maidstone's text is printed in *Carmelus* 5 (1958) pp.132-80: here see pp.139-44, 167-8, 178-9: for the warnings against prying discrimination pp.141-3.

9 On these figures see Q. Skinner, *Foundations of Modern Political Thought* (Cambridge, 1978) I, p.74. Such attitudes are present in William of St Amour and his followers, such as Jean de Meun, but the significant point here seems to be that such attitudes were not widely developed outside the mid-13th century Parisian conflicts until the mid-14th to 16th century: see M-M. Dufeil, *Guillaume de Saint Amour* (Paris, 1972) pp.358-62, 260-87; J.C. Schmitt, *Morte d'une hérésie*, pp.55-60.

10 *Bullarium Franciscanum*, ed. I.H. Sbaralea and C. Eubel, vol. 5 (Rome, 1898): on the pre-lapsarian state and God's creation of private property after the fall see especially pp.422-4, 439-41 (*Quia vir reprobus*): quoted here from pp.422, 421; on Christ, pp.441-3; see also on Christ and apostles, *Quia quorumdam mentis*, pp.244-5, 275-9.

11 G. Leff, *Heresey in the Later Middle Ages*, 2 vols. (Manchester, 1967), I, 247, 248, 249; see I, chapter 2 *passim*, and Lambert, *Franciscan Poverty*, chapter 10.

12 I use the English translation of FitzRalph's *Defensio Curatorum* in *Dialogus*, ed. A.J. Perry, EETS, OS 167 (1925) pp.83-5; 31, 80; the attraction FitzRalph ("Saint Richard" - see A. Hudson's example in *Journal of Theological Studies*, 23 (1972) p.73) held for the Lollards needs examination in this context. On FitzRalph, see Katharine Walsh, *A Fourteenth Century Scholar and Primate* (Oxford, 1981), especially chapter 5 on "the mendicant controversy".

13 FitzRalph, p.71; cf. Owst, *Literature and Pulpit*, pp.555-7.

14 See especially, Schmitt, *Mort d'une hérésie*, pp.152-7, 162-73, 182-91.

15 On economic change and impoverishment, see Lis and Soly, *Poverty and Capitalism*, chapters 1 and 2, and the historians cited in note 2; there are, however, real problems in establishing any precise chronology and giving adequate acknowledgement to regional variations - cf. C.C. Dyer, *Lords and Peasants in a changing society* (Cambridge, 1980) pp.349-54, 110-12.

16 Lis and Soly, *Poverty and Capitalism*, pp.33-52, 231-4; Mollat, *Les Pauvres*, p.350; B.H. Putnam, *The Enforcement of the Statute of Labourers* (New York, 1908).

17 FitzRalph, pp.83, 89: see too the transformation of Jesus's command to the rich young man to sell all and give to the poor, p.91.

18 All references to Langland's poem are to *Piers Plowman: the B version*, ed. G. Kane and E.T. Donaldson (London, 1975); when the C version is referred to the text used is D.A. Pearsall's edition (London, 1978). On beggars in *Piers Plowman*, B and C versions, see E.T. Donaldson, *Piers Plowman* (New Haven, 1949) pp.130-6. The most relevant essay to the present one is probably R. Adams, "The Nature of Need in *Piers Plowman*", *Traditio* 34 (1978) pp.273-301, in which the author attempts to argue that "Langland never shifts his basic principles on the issues associated with poverty" and that these principles are unequivocally and unquestioningly those of FitzRalph and William of St Amour. My own views, as will emerge, are very different.

19 For example, X. 13-116.

20 See B. Tierney, *Medieval Poor Law*, pp.112-19.

21 Aers, *Chaucer, Langland*, chapters 1-2.

22 Aers, *Chaucer, Langland*, chapter 1. On stratification see the studies by Z. Razi, *Life, Marriage and Death in a Medieval Parish* (Cambridge, 1980) and E.B. Dewindt, *Land and People in Holywell-cum-Needingworth* (Toronto, 1972).

23 See, among many illustrations, VI. 17-32, 91-3; V. 546-8, and Aers, *Piers Plowman and Christian Allegory*, chapter 5, and *Chaucer, Langland*, chapter 1.

24 See *The Peasants' Revolt of 1381*, ed. R.B. Dobson (London, 1970) pp.136-7, 370-1, 374-5 and R. Hilton, *Bond Men Made Free* (London, 1973) pp.213-15, 221-4, 227-30.

25 On the Pardon, see Aers, *Chaucer, Langland*, 20-23 and for a relevant

comparison of B and C versions here, Donaldson, *Piers Plowman*, pp.130-36.

26 Adams, *op.cit.* in note 19 above. For a different view, in my own opinion nearer the mark, see M.W. Bloomfield, *Piers Plowman as a Fourteenth-Century Apocalypse* (New Brunswick, N.J., 1961), especially p.72.

27 See authorities cited in note 2 for exemplification.

28 For the sermon in question, used in a different context, see E.J. Douglas, *Justification in Medieval Preaching* (Leiden, 1966) pp.144-5. Also on Geiler, Schmitt, *Morte d'une hérésie*, pp.185-87.

29 Further examples, X. 59-66, 83-9, 205-7, 361-7; XI. 176-91, 243-5; XIII. 438-43; XIV. 109-25, 160-80, 213-15; XV. 244-8, 342-3. See too C addition, IX. 70-97.

30 See too XI. 199-204, 232-78.

31 The most sustained attempt to read *Piers Plowman* as an unequivocally and consistently Franciscan poem is by Guy Bourquin, *Piers Plowman*, 2 volumes (Lille and Paris, 1978), especially pp.291-4. 328, 379-84, 399, 419, 649-52, 666, 693-736.

32 Translated in Lambert, *Franciscan Poverty*, p.59.

33 *The Vision of Piers Plowman*, ed. A.V. Schmidt (London, 1978) p.343; Bourquin, *Piers Plowman*, p.419.

34 *De quantitate eleemosynae quaestio*, in *Op.om.* (Constantiae, 1632), 76-7.

35 On Haukyn in this context, Aers, *Chaucer, Langland*, pp.27-9.

36 For the literature on this figure see the article by Adams, cited in note 19, and also Bourquin, *Piers Plowman*, pp.328, 722.

37 On such rights, see for example, St Thomas Aquinas, *ST*, II-II. 66-7: note the careful qualifications at lines 11-16, 18-20, 22, overlooked by Adams (*op.cit.*, in note 19 above).

38 While Langland calls for evangelical missionary activity overseas, in Passus XV, he seems to place little special emphasis on preaching, and so encourages the unjustifiable identification of the friar's vocation and the hermits.

39 M-M. Dufeil, *Guillaume de Saint Amour*, pp.295-324, 352; also J. Mann, *Chaucer and Medieval Estates Satire* (Cambridge, 1973) pp.37-54, 226-33.

40 *Piers the Plowman*, ed. W.W. Skeat, 2 volumes (1886; Oxford, 1968), II. p. 212.

41 See L.K. Little, *Religious Poverty and the Profit Economy in Medieval Europe* (London, 1978), chapters 9-12; and writings in note 2.

42 The C version needs examination in the perspectives outlined in the present essay (see Donaldson, *Piers Plowman*, pp.130-36), and the lengthy addition at C IX. 70-161 would require detailed attention. This important passage

includes a legitimation of able-bodied lunatic mendicants, not only because they are God's minstrels-fools-prophets, but also because they are totally free of any material self-interest and accumulation, unlike "lewede ermytes" and "beggares with bagges". The passage which begins with a concrete and powerful meditation on the deprivation of "pore folk in cotes", expresses an outrage at the transformation of Franciscan ideals and does not, finally, revert to the kind of work ethos manifested in B V-VII.

SURVIVAL AND REVIVALS OF ALLITERATIVE MODES

By J.A.W. BENNETT

Writers on the so-called "alliterative revival" usually have in mind the *Gawain*-poet, the *Morte Arthure*, *Piers Plowman*, and its immediate predecessors and successors. Many of these are notable works on any count, and several have been accorded the dignity of separate editions. Since most of them are written in the alliterative long line we tend to take that as the norm, and the stanzaic refinements of *Gawain* and *Pearl* as evidence of their writers' unusual verbal dexterity. But this is to leave out of account evidence suggesting that the stanzaic form was established fifty years or so before these poems were written. The process of decomposition - or recomposition - that is so noticeable in Laȝamon had probably proceeded throughout the 13th century. The date of the second Laȝamon MS[1] (c.1270-80) suggests that his poem had found a public throughout that century. Many of the Harley lyrics - and they can hardly be earlier than the turn of the century - are heavily alliterative: one might regard them as so many variations on all the possibilities of the alliterative line - experiments that threw up new patterns such as we find in these lines:

> Mon in þe mone stond ant strit;
> On is bot-forke is burþen he bereþ.[2]

There are even signs of internal alliteration - possibly due to Welsh influences about which there has already been some speculation[3] - and even the short-lined lyric "Lenten ys come wiþ loue to toune" has a more or less distinct caesural break between alliterating staves; it builds up to a climax of six lines all alliterating on *w*; though admittedly there are similar bravura effects in Anglo-French verse.[4]

I take the poem *Somer Soneday*, published by Carleton Brown in the Klaeber Festschrift, and reprinted by his pupil R.H. Robbins in his collection of *Historical Poems* (No. 38),[5] to represent a further stage in this metrical experimentation. It is certainly more ambitious than any of the lyrics, even in its present defective form. Whether or no the king it describes as "a caytif he was become, and kenned on care" (line 129) was Edward II (and I think it doubtful), it must - on paleographical grounds - be dated before 1450.[6] And its language suggests a West Midland provenance, like that of the Harley lyrics. The first stanza will show some of the affinities with, and differences from, the more familiar alliterative poems:

Opon a somer soneday se I þe sonne
  Erly risinde in þe est ende;
Day daweþ ouer doune, derk is in towne,
  I warp on my wedes, to wode wolde I wende.
Wiþ kenettes kene þat wel couþe crie and conne,
  I hiede to holte wiþ honteres hende.
So ryfly on rugge roon and raches ronne
  þat in launde vnder lynde me leste to lende -
          And Lenede.

  Kenettes questede to quelle,
  Al-so breme so any belle;
  þe deer daunteden in þe delle,
     Þat al þe downe denede. (1-13)

The opening line suggests the opening line of *Piers Plowman*; "in launde under lynde me leste to lende" reappears at the beginning of *Piers Plowman* B XVIII; "warp on my wedes" is a variant of the formulaic half-line found in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, line 2025. Later there are such set phrases as "browes ibente" and "blisful burde". Moreover the scene described, the hunting terms deployed, suggest immediately the deer-hunt in *Gawain*, and other later poems. In the alliterative patterns, however, there are three striking differences from *Gawain*:

(1) There are regularly two alliterating staves in the second half line.
(2) Alternate lines are linked by rhyme or assonance.
(3) The bob and wheel is inverted, and looks both before and after: it is tied into the main stanza *and* to the succeeding stanza.

True, the poet finds it hard to keep to this pattern throughout, but he then resorts to still more complex verbal devices, illustrated in a verse put in the mouth of a climber on fortune's wheel:

Be kynde it me com
to cleyme kyngene kyngdom,
kyndom be kynde.
To me þe whel wile wynde.
Wynd wel, worþliche wyȝth;
fare fortune, frendene flyȝth
Flitte forþe flyȝtte
On þe selue sete to sitte. (79-86)

This is more complex, and more cryptic, than anything in *Pearl*.

Further, the theme and the presentation thereof place *Somer Soneday* in the centre of the alliterative corpus. As the dreamer in Langland meets with Nature and the dreamer in the *Parlement of the Thre Ages* with Elde and Youth, so here the narrator sees Fortune in a wood, turning her wheel - "a wonder whelwryȝth" - the very formula to be used in the later *Awntyrs of Arthure*, also in alliterative stanzas; and so also in *Golagros*, not to mention the alliterative

Morte Arthure, where Fortune, finely dressed, as here, again brings her wheel into a wood. Indeed, if we go just beyond the alliterative border to the early *Book of the Duchess*, we can say that much of 14th century poetry is found in embryo in *Somer Soneday*. It suggests that there was already an audience for subtle and sinuous alliterative verse: an audience that one can define only as consisting of all such classes as would be attracted by descriptions of a deer hunt - which means everybody from noble lords and hunting parsons to sturdy yeomen, in short, the audience for whom Chaucer made his Theseus a servant of the hunting goddess. Alliterative verse is no longer merely the medium for chronicle and tales of battles long ago. It has developed a springy and elastic stanzaic form that can, and will, be applied to all sorts of purposes. This form offers relief from the monotony of the long line, and great possibilities to the metrical virtuoso. The northern and Scots alliterative poems of the 15th century will be almost entirely stanzaic. Nothing in Old or Early Middle English prepares us for this flowering - unless *Deor* does.

If *Somer Soneday* focuses on recent history, the next items we must consider, the poems of Laurence Minot, are on purely contemporary topics. He is the first journalist in verse, an early Skelton. His stanzas on events in the early years of Edward III[7] are pithy, pungent, largely in monosyllables, doubtless aiming at a wide circulation, like Elizabethan broadsides - but much more accomplished. The pattern of roughly equivalent half lines still persists - the caesural break is marked, and traditional formulas like "fers and fell", "wight in wede", are put to use. One such formula, "god and good men", exemplifies the contribution of older vernacular prose usage to alliterative verse.[8] It belongs originally to the Norse stratum of Danelaw speech - so is found in the *Orrmulum* - and will turn up again in *Piers Plowman*, having escaped beyond the Danelaw. A more distinctive formula of similar origin is found only in Orm and in the alliterative *Wars of Alexander* - the description of the Wizard who

> Did on him his dragon-hame and drafe thurȝe the sale,
> With slike a rowste and rerid, the romance it wittnes
> þat nere had bernes for that bere bene broȝt out of
> witt.[9]

The alliterative line has always been hospitable to such inclusive formulae, and Minot has some fresh ones like "cony nor cat". But my present purpose is to note his use of the rhymed line and the linked stanza, in the repeated phrase, as in:

> Skottes out of Berwik and of Abirdene
> At þe Bannokburn war ȝe to kene;
> þare slogh ȝe many sakles, als it was sene,
> And now has King Edward wroken it, I wene.
> It es wrokin, I wene, wele wurth þe while
> War ȝit with þe Skottes for þai er ful of gile![10]

The next stanza picks up the word Skottes, beginning

Whare er ȝe Skottes of Saint Iohnes toune?

A later stanza has some lusty abusive lines that show a development - if that's the word - of the flyting tradition first found in the Unferth episode in *Beowulf*:

Rughfute riueling, now kindels þi care
Berebag with þi boste, þi biging es bare.

Northern poets were to prove all too partial to that kind of mud-slinging, which often produces nonce compounds like that *berebag*.[11]

Minot's verses on the taking of Calais (1347) have a shorter, brisker, heavily alliterative line; a variation on the last line of one stanza provides the first word of the next:

3owre care es cumen, will ȝe it *ken*.

leading to

Kend it es how ȝe war kene . . .

though as in *Somer Soneday* this device breaks down after seven stanzas.

As a boy, Chaucer must have heard such verses sung or shouted in the streets. And I believe that neither Machaut nor de Meun, nor Dante nor Boccaccio ever pushed alliterative rhythms and phrases out of his head. I have argued elsewhere that he knew *Piers Plowman* - of which the first revision was probably finished before he had penned a line - and that it was accessible to him in London.[12] There was nothing limitingly local in its language: a Londoner, Thomas Usk, had lines from *Piers Plowman* running in his head just before they lopped it off in 1388,[13] and just about the time that Langland was writing the unknown author of the alliterative *Morte Arthure* was blending scenes from Geoffrey of Monmouth and the French Alexander romances into a didactic epic that was evidently intended, *inter alia*, as a comment on the government of Edward III and the conduct of his French wars. *Morte Arthure* too, then, is a topical poem, though far more dignified than Minot - it perhaps belongs to Lincolnshire rather than the North.[14] Its nearest antecedent is *Winner and Waster*, about the mid century,[15] though *Winner and Waster* is not as topical as it looks - not so much a tract for the times as a "rather poor" variation on the favourite medieval theme of saving and spending. It is in *Winner and Waster* that the standard alliterative line reappears, with some modifications. *Gawain* represents a fusion of this traditional line with the earlier stanzaic developments outlined above. It keeps the traditional pattern in the body of the stanza but admits rhyme and rhyme links in the bob and wheel.

In the period 1350-1380, then, the main drift, the dominant trend, of vernacular verse was towards alliteration, with tail rhyme a very poor second. Chaucer had no reason to think of it as low, barbarous, or uncouth, even though the court favoured French,

and even though French verse was more delicate, graceful and witty. Merely to choose to write in English was to recognise the possibilities of native verse. And Chaucer evidently felt the peculiar fitness of native alliteration for describing scenes of combat and warfare: scenes for which neither French nor Italian verse provided him with adequate models - whilst Froissart had still to write his prose accounts of the fighting in France.

The main evidence is in the tourney scene in the *Knight's Tale* (*CT*, I.2600-20) and the description of the naval engagement off Actium in the *Legend of Good Women*, 635-55. Almost all the features of alliterative poetry - including the "liberties" taken by the stanzaists - are to be found in these two passages, which perhaps resemble each other more than any other sets of similar length in the whole canon (not least in repeated inversions and plethora of deictic pronouns). It is worth noting that in both the alliteration is entirely consonantal:

> Ther shyveren shaftes upon sheeldes thikke (*KnT* 2605)
> With grysely soun out goth the grete gonne (*LGW* 637)

and that the caesural break is usually clearly marked:

> And he hym hurtleth / with his hors adoun (*KnT* 2616)
> He styngeth hym / upon his speres orde (*LGW* 645)

though the break is delayed and less marked in a line like

> He feeleth thurgh the herte-spoon the prikke (*KnT* 2606)

Though older battle pieces are heavily formulaic, few of the formulas appear here: combat and weaponry had become more elaborate by the fourteenth century and it was no longer enough to say "faege men feollon". Yet a few words and phrases keep the flavour of the "classical" language, such as "shyveren shaftes", and the adverb *heterly* (*LGW* 638). From the 12th to the 15th century the latter word is encountered only in alliterative contexts, namely in the alliterative prose of the Katherine group, the alliterative *Troy* and *Alexander* poems, *Gawain*, and here. Another link with *Gawain* is provided by the French verb *foyne*:

> He foyneth on his feet with his tronchoun (*KnT* 2615)

So Arthur's household *foyned* the Green Knight's head. One of the few other examples of the word is in the alliterative *Morte Arthure* (1494): "foynes faste atte the fore breste with flawmande swerdez".[16]

The Actium passage also takes us to the alliterative *Morte*, for there, at lines 3644ff, is to be found the only other verse account of a sea battle: it is probably based on contemporary accounts of the battle of Espagnole-sur-Mer. Chaucer in his medieval way has modernised Cleopatra's fleet, giving it guns and grapnels - the *crepers* of *Morte* 3667 which are used in both passages to tear down the ropes supporting mast and topcastle. In both accounts the hatches are burnt, the foe thrown or driven overboard (at which, in

the *Morte*, 3698, "alle oure lordes one lowde laughene at ones"). Both begin and end in the same way:

> Up goth the trompe, and for to shoute and shete
> (*LGW* 635)
> Merily iche a mate . . . braggede in trompes.
> (*MA* 3657)
> And thus the longe day in fyght they spende
> [Antony flees] And al his folk to-go that best go myghte
> (*LGW* 650-3)
> Thus they dalte that daye, thire dubbidde knyghtes,
> Tille alle the Danes ware dede, and in the depe throwene
> (*MA* 3693-4)

If there are few formulas in either piece, that is because there were no models for either poet to follow. But the naval battle and the tournament alike show Chaucer exploiting the onomatopoeic effect of certain initial consonant groups, especially to suggest harsh noise and violent action. So in describing the "grisly" temple of Mars he clogs the lines with phrases like "knotty, knarry", "stubbes sharpe", "Contek with blody knyf", "shippes hoppesteres" (all from *KnT* 1975ff). In this same passage we also find an unusual number of lines with marked caesural pause that breaks them into two half-lines linked by alliteration:

> For wyndowe on the wal ne was ther noon (1988)
> The pykepurs and eek the pale Drede (1977)
> Amyddes of the temple sat Meschaunce (2009)
> The shepne brennynge with the blake smoke (2000)
> (transverse allit.)

It is in the light of these passages that we must consider the Parson's disclaimer: "I am a Southren man, / I kan nat geste - 'rum ram ruf' - by lettre" (*CT*, X.42-3). This is undoubtedly pejorative in intention. But unless it is glancing at Chaucer's own "rum ram ruf" - and note that the knight has overweighted alliteration in some of his lines about the tourney, eg. "He thurgh the thikkeste of the throng gan threste, / There stomblen steedes stronge . . .", 2612-13) - Unless that is what is satirised, the words tell us no more than that the unworldly, serious-minded Parson did not hold with the secular poetry popular or fashionable in his day. He has been asked to *tell a tale* and he is eschewing both alliteration *and* rhyme ("God woot, rym holde I but litel bettre"). And as a vehicle for narrative (as opposed to didactic or vision poetry) alliterative verse was indeed associated with the North. But the Parson avers that he cannot - and will not - compose it, not that he cannot understand it. "Rum ram ruf" may well allude to the enriched or overweighted alliterative lines that are found in the northern stanzaic romances. It is by no means certain that *geste* means, as is usually supposed, "compose in alliterative measure".[17] It may mean simply "compose a geste, a tale".

But it is the phrase "by lettre" that we should here attend to. English poets had apparently composed alliterative verse for seven

hundred years, à la M. Jourdain, without ever naming it - so much was it the natural, the inherited medium. It is curious that about the same time that Chaucer wrote his Tales an equally self-conscious West Midland poet has described *his* tale as "with lel letteres loken",[18] a beautifully apt description of the alliterative line, whether or no the following phrase "in londe so hatz ben longe" refers to the continuity of the alliterative tradition.[19] Neither poet, of course, meant by "lettre" written letters of the alphabet, but initial *sounds*, as the Squire does in his Tale (*CT*, f.101), describing the Knight who hales in at the hall door, precisely like the Green Knight, and announces his message "withouten vice of silable or of lettre".

There was, to be sure, a familiar rhetorical term for alliteration as found in Latin. Gerald of Wales (who claimed, incidentally, that the French were entirely ignorant of this verbal elegance) cites two examples from Virgil:

> Tales casus Cassandra canebat (*Æn*.iii.183);
> Dum dubitet Natura marem faceretve puellam,
> Natus es, O pulcher, pene puella, puer.[20]

Annominatio, says Gerald of Wales, was much favoured by the Welsh (or as Camden was to put it, "the English & Welsh delighted much in licking the letter, and clapping together of Agnominations").[21] An English example cited by Gerald is very revealing. It is the phrase

> God [good] is togedere gamen and wisdom.

Though he does not recognise it as such, this makes a perfectly respectable alliterative verse line and it also illustrates the English fondness for putting gnomic statements into alliterative form: compare "ofte owere dom at owere durre charret", which I find scribbled in the margin of MS Lambeth 93, f.60a, of the same date.

This takes me well beyond my brief. Yet we cannot understand Chaucer's attitude to alliterative verse, or the general acceptance of it, unless we recognise alliteration as part of the very texture of our language and our thought. I give a mere scatter of Chaucer's alliterative combinations, many of them instanced only in earlier alliterative verse, though some doubtless were more widespread and in colloquial use. They are tenacious of life because they compact general experience.

(1) combinations of cognates:

CT, II.388 sent his sonde (frequent in Laȝamon, but not earlier)
I.2338 brondes . . . brennynge (no precise parallel earlier, but a similar phrase occurs in the Old Frisian Laws, and see Oakden, p.237)[22]

(2) combinations of similars:

I.2605: shaftes . . . sheldes (in OE and ON verse)
II.873 wynd and weder (Laȝamon, Katherine group)
I.309 War and wys (OE, *Orrmulum*)[23]

(3) combinations of near-synonyms:

I.536 dyke and delve (Laȝamon, *Piers Plowman*)
I.1416 drugge and drawe (Old Frisian Laws; also Dunbar, Douglas)

(4) antitheses (very common):

VII.796 dale and downe (OE *Phoenix*, Laȝamon, Orm)
PF 46 lered or lewed (Laȝamon, Orm)
I.1837 loth or lief (OE and ON verse)

(5) Nouns chained to adjectives:

V.1305 cares cold (cf. *Beowulf* 2396: "cealdum cearsiðum")
I.2419 sorwes sore (Katherine group)
I.2309 wodes wilde (Laȝamon)

(6) Miscellaneous combinations:

II.1104 falleth hym to feete (OE, Laȝamon)
I.2171 As a leon he his lookyng caste (*Piers Plowman*)

On the other hand, many of Chaucer's combinations are *not* found earlier: not "straunge strondes" (*CT*, I.13), "sterne stremes" (I. 2610) - nor even "fair of face" (VII.28). The fact is that the whole *set* of the language - much strengthened by the Norse admixture - has always favoured such pairings. This circumstance helped powerfully to keep alliterative poetry alive.

It did not die from disuse, but from being overdone. The admission of two alliterating staves into the second half line opened the way for lines in which almost every word alliterates - "rum ram ruf" indeed. On the other hand the admission of rhymed couplets made for conflict, or compromise. Before the mid-century we find even half-lines riming in *Love is Life*, attributed to Richard Rolle -

> Lere to luf, if thou wyl lyfe / when thou sall hethen fare
> All thi thoght til Hym thou gyf / that may þe kepe fra kare[24]

- where only the first and fourth half-lines alliterate (within themselves) and the metre is syllabic. *The Choristers' Complaint*,[25] a decidedly northern text, is likewise syllabic; it keeps the old half-line pattern but loads the second half-line with double alliteration and the first sometimes with triple:

> Uncomly in cloistre I cowre ful of care;
> I looke as a lurdein and - listne til my lare -
> The song of the ce-sol-fa dos me siken sare
> And sitte stotiand on a song a moneth and mare.
> (lines 1-4)

Even here, alliteration sometimes yields to rhyme:

> Way me, leve Water, thou werkes al til shame
> Thou stumblest and stikes fast as thou were lame.
> (17-18)

In such *jeux d'esprit* we are far away from traditional formulaic verse, alike in theme and language. Only one phrase sounds like a set formula - "I donke upon David" ("I hammer away at the Psalms"). In *Piers Plowman* too they "ding upon David" (B.III.310). Yet further away are the lines on *The Blacksmiths* ("Unsocial hours").[26] In this deliberately onomatopoeic exercise, once more, some lines have five alliterating staves some even six, like triple hammer blows:

> Swarte smekyd smeþes / smateryd wyth smoke
> Dryve me to deth / with den of here dyntes
> Swech noys on nightes / ne herd men never
> What knavene cry / and clateryng of knokkes
> þe camede congons / cryen after "Col! Col!"

This outdoes Virgil's representation of the clang of hammer on anvil in *Æneid* VIII.423, and is only equalled when the Green Knight sharpens his axe:

> Quat! hit clatered in the clyff, as hit cleve schulde,
> As one upon a gryndelston hade grounden a sythe
> What! hit wharred and whette, as water at a mulne;
> What! hit rusched and ronge, rawþe to here.
> (2201-4)

The alliterative technique survived and flourished precisely in these Northern areas where initial consonants preserved their strength and where words with strong initial consonantal groups bulked large in the vocabulary.

As I have already suggested, the Northern and Scottish development is not from the alliterative line as we know it in the 14th century masterpieces but from the rhymed stanza. The gap between *Somer Soneday* and the Northern *Awntyrs of Arthur*, or *Golagros*, is not so great as the text books lead one to believe. Both the Northern romances may belong to the late fourteenth, not the fifteenth, century. Then, probably, come the *Buke of the Houlat* and *Rauf Coilȝear*. The technique of all four is adequately analysed by F.J. Amours,[27] and I need not dwell on it, save to mention that traditional formulae again appear in mainly fighting scenes. The York Plays, so thick with alliterative expressions, approach the Scottish stanza form in Play 46 (The Appearance of Our Lady to Thomas). Gavin Douglas, in the Prologue to *Æneid VIII* adapts the stanza form to moralising satire. Douglas is a bishop, and familiar with Renascence classical scholarship, yet he can still turn his hand to this older form. The opening lines indicate his acquaintance with the tradition:

> Of drefling and dremis quhat dow it to endyt?
> For, as I lenyt in a ley in Lent this last nycht,
> I slaid on a swevynnyng, slummerand a lite.[28]

The dreamer in *Piers Plowman* likewise "lened to a Lenten", and in fact Douglas has a cryptic reference to *Piers Plowman* in his *Palice of Honour* (line 1714). The prologue to *Æneid VIII*, like some earlier alliterative verse, is estates satire (and David Lindsay was to revive the pattern in his *Satire of the Three Estates* 20 years later); one or two long-lived alliterative phrases pop up, like "Caynis kyne", found also in Langland (B.IX.127); the line "was nevir wrocht in this warld mayr wofull a wycht" (6) is a formula found also in the *Awntyrs of Arthur* (189). There is much thrust and parry in the dialogue. Evidently Douglas found nothing incongruous in setting this essentially vernacular diatribe alongside Virgil.

Douglas wrote this prologue in or before 1513. 1513 was the year of Flodden, the greatest disaster in Scottish history, the end of an epoch. It was fittingly commemorated in *Scottish Field*, the last alliterative poem in the epic chronicle style. It is in the direct line of descent from the alliterative *Morte Arthur*, and uses the same kind of alliteration, the same vocabulary, the same 14th century formulas (e.g. makeles of mercy, nicked them with nay). Whole lines can be matched in the 14th century poems:

> That all the dale dunned of their derfe strokes (329; cf. *Morte Arthure* 2031)
> Clowdes cast vp full cleerlye like Castles full hie (307; cf. *Gawain* 2001)
> Thus he promised to the prince that paradice weldeth (203; cf. *St. Erkenwald* 161)
> And profer him a present all of pure gold (106; cf. *Piers Plowman* A.VII.282)[29]

The alliterative line, in more than one sense, goes down fighting.

A few years before Flodden, however, the traditional line had been put to rather new uses in Dunbar's *Two Married Women and the Widow*, that rich blend of traditional alliterative language and setting with sharp satire and colloquial abuse. The thick spitting rasping Northern consonants have always been good for vilification: when combined alliteratively they are deafening. And the alliterative tradition, insofar as it survived after Flodden, died of its own too much. Dunbar, Kennedy, Montgomery, all raked the gutters for new and dirty alliterative epithets. By the time James VI, at the tender age of 18, came to set down his "Reulis and Cawtelis" for Scottish poetry, "tumbling" verse, as he called it, had come to be associated entirely with such flytings.

His account[30] constitutes the epitaph of the alliterative tradition. Knox set the Scots to psalm singing instead. And EK's remark in his Dedication to the *Shepherd's Calendar* suggests the same sort of degradation, or limitation, in English use: "I scorne and spue out the rakehellye route of our ragged rymers - for so themselves use to hunt the letter". But a loose alliterative epilogue to a local mystery play indicates that the mode was still acceptable on formal occasions to a small town audience as late as the 1550's.

> Now, wursheppful souereyns þat syttyn here in syth,
> Lordys and ladyes and frankelens in fay,
> With alle maner of abesyans we recomaunde vs ryght
> Plesantly to ȝour persones that present ben in play.[31]

So completely did the tradition die out that when OE poems were rediscovered and printed in the 17th century scholars had difficulty in recognising them as verse. George Hickes, the great non-juring divine, was the first to do this in his massive *Thesaurus Linguarum Septentrionalium* (1705). Hickes was a little troubled by the varying number of syllables; but he recognised that the words were linked alliteratively - aptly and rhythmically ("concinne valde et rythmice conjunctis").[32] He saw that alliteration was unlikely to derive from usage in Latin poets (though Landor was to devise an imaginary conversation in which Ovid discussed the matter in exile among the Goths!) And Hickes recognised that alliteration was basic in Langland too - indeed he thought that he was imitating Anglo-Saxon, because he has the same "tinnitum consonantem initialium". His quotations from Spenser and Donne show too that he had some sense of the persistence of alliteration in English verse. But his remarks are buried deep in a great folio volume that few could afford and that never sold very well. A century later an historian like Sharon Turner could still imagine that alliteration was merely an "occasional ornament" of Anglo-Saxon verse. Not till German scholarship got to work were the techniques of alliteration thoroughly investigated; notably by Rieger, in 1876,[33] who drew on Snorri's *Háttalal* and discovered, for instance, that in Old English as in Old Saxon the key is always to be found in the first accented syllable of the second half-line. Then in 1885 Sievers proclaimed the doctrine of the Five Types that was eventually challenged by Heusler and Leonard. The debate still continues, as may be seen from an article by Winfred Lehmann on the alliteration of Old Saxon Poetry in a collection of essays on the *Heliand*.[34]

I began by questioning the usefulness of the term "Alliterative Revival". There is only one century to which that term might apply - our own. The return to alliterative patterns in our own time has been wholly deliberate, and in origin largely academic: an unexpected offshoot from the grafting of Anglo-Saxon studies on to university curricula. Of 19th century metrical innovators only two, Hopkins and Tennyson, show any interest in alliterative metre (in Swinburne alliteration is merely a disease). Hopkins, though he found *Piers Plowman* not worth reading for its content, professed to see in it the basis of his sprung rhythm: he doesn't even mention its alliteration. Perhaps he took it for granted: certainly in some of his poems alliteration almost amounts to a structural principle:

> Some candle clear burns / somewhere I come by.
> I muse at how its being / puts blissful back
> With yellowy moisture / mild night's blear-all black,
> Or to-fro tender trambeams / truckle at the eye.[35]

He is in this respect different from most Romantic and post-Romantic

poets, who, however, were perhaps more alert to the sensuous effects of alliteration than their predecessors. So we find Wordsworth employing it in lines like:

> A blue rim borders all the lake's still brink . . .
> There waves, that, hardly weltering, die away,
> Tip their smooth ridges with a softer ray.[36]

Tennyson owed his acquaintance with Anglo-Saxon verse to his Cambridge friend John Kemble, first professor of Anglo-Saxon in the University. He produced a version of *The Battle of Brunanburh*, which does at least indicate the pattern of roughly equivalent half-lines, even if inflexional losses make his lines more staccato than his originals. He used the text and translation in Guest's *History of English Rhythms* (1838). His metre is in fact unrhymed dactylics and trochaics:

> Edmund Atheling
> Gaining a lifelong
> Glory in battle
> Slew with the sword-edge
> There by Brunanburh
> Brake the shield-wall.

To alliteration as such Tennyson was always particularly partial, confessing that he had to comb through early drafts, eliminating alliterative excesses. But his Victorian nostalgia for Anglo-Saxon virtues never took him further than this formal battlepiece.

For the first recreation of the Anglo-Saxon verse pattern we must turn to Ezra Pound. His version of the *Seafarer*, as Saxonists will gleefully point out, is full of howlers: his Anglo-Saxon was no stronger than his Greek, or his Chinese. It was the rhythm of the verse that attracted him. He puts down the Old English *Charms* and the *Seafarer* as required reading. His rendering of the latter at least shows us what we can*not* reproduce in modern verse: namely, the weight of the consonants (and double consonants); the clear vowels in unaccented final syllabes (*alegdon*); the effect of the "gripped" epithet that holds a noun as in a vice. Our unemphatic articles, definite or indefinite, merely clutter the alliterative line. The Old English line is wrought and fashioned, like masonry. Even when it is liquid it is sonorous:

> Aledon þa leofne þeoden.

Pound's version of the Old English elegy (written at about the same time that he was advising Eliot to cut out the seapiece from *The Waste Land*) does recreate the *beat* and pattern of the original:

> May I for my own self song's truth reckon,
> Journey's jargon, how I in harsh days
> Hardship endured oft.
> Bitter breastcares have I abided,
> Known on my keel many a care's hold

And dire sea-surge, and there I oft spent
Narrow nightwatch nigh the ship's head
While she tossed close to cliffs. Coldly afflicted,
My feet were by frost benumbed,
Chill its chains are.

Some of these lines keep the original stress and alliteration. In others the stress shifts to forms that would not normally carry it in Old English. In 1.2 the alliteration fails. Sometimes he allows double alliteration in the second half-line ("days little durable"). But in general he gives us the resonance and mood of the piece better than Tennyson.

There come now no kings or Caesars
Nor gold-giving lords like those gone.

But we are still within the realms of translation - as we are in Gavin Bone's alliterative renderings, one of which appeared in *The London Mercury* in its heyday. Bone's version of *The Seafarer* is rather a poem suggested by *The Seafarer* than a rendering.[37]

It is when we come to Auden that we find a poet who has been taught Anglo-Saxon (and brought up on Norse saga). His first long work, the charade *Paid on Both Sides* (1930), based on a saga situation, is full of allusions to Anglo-Saxon poetic themes, from *Finnesburh* to *Maldon*, and of phrases from *Beowulf* and the elegies:

. . . Doomed men awoke . . .
Would wake their master
Upstairs together,
Guns shook,
Fighters lay,
Gave up life.
By no means refused fight.

Who lay with woman,
Tired after love . . .
Hot in the hand,
Groaning on ground
Edward fell, . . .

This still has an air of pastiche; but Auden's interest (or was it the Oxford syllabus?) took him to Middle English alliterative prose and he began a poem with a line straight out of the alliterative prose of *Sawles Warde*:

Doom is dark and deeper than any sea-dingle[38]

And in 1945, in his New York Eclogue, *The Age of Anxiety*, he gave us a large scale alliterative poem, in half-lines linked by alliteration, with marked caesural pause. Most of them can be read according to the classical five types, though the second half line often has to end with a stress.

Curiously enough, the poem is most successful in scenes of combat (this time *air*-combat):

Untalkative and tense, we took off
Anxious into air; our instruments glowed,
Dials in darkness, for dawn was not yet;
Pulses pounded; we approached our target . . .

Bullets were about, blazing anger
Lunged from below . . .

The proportion of run-on lines is noticeable, and there is some repetition with variation in the following half-line, in the Old English manner ("instruments glowed, / Dials in darkness"). Auden even makes use of tags, but satirically - they are the tired tags of copy-writers and newscasters:

Definitely different. Has that democratic
Extra elegance. Easy to clean.
Will gladden grand-dad and your girl friend.
Lasts a lifetime. Leaves no odour.

Part of the dialogue is in the manner of the Old English *Deor*, with a refrain corresponding to *Deor's* "þæs ofereode: þisses alswa mæg": "Many have perished; more will". The *Times Literary Supplement* reviewer who spoke of Auden's adaptation of Langland's alliterative method[39] was misled by two purely verbal parallels in the line he cited:

When in wanhope I wandered away and alone.

That line is not only uncharacteristic: it bears no rhythmic resemblance to *Piers Plowman* at all.

Meanwhile, at Oxford, Tolkien and C.S. Lewis went on teaching Old English and Middle English poetry. Lewis wrote a plain man's guide to alliterative metre (or rather a plain woman's: it was contributed to an ill-fated woman's journal called *Lysistrata*). They composed alliterative verse as a parlour, or bar-parlour game. But a younger Magdalen man, Richard Murphy, who ruined a year of *Beowulf* with me, made several effective adaptations of the Old English line - using two-stressed half-lines usually linked by alliteration in his poem, "The Last Galway Hooker":

That "tasty" carpenter from Connemara, Cloherty,
Helped by his daughter, had half-planked the hull
In his eightieth year, when at work he died.[40]

Murphy's poem on "The Cleggan Disaster" has some subtle variations on this pattern; and again it is noteworthy that the scenes he is describing might have come from Old English poems about the trials and dangers of the sea.

Finally, the wheel, having come full circle, stops with the author of the *Lord of the Rings*, who composed light alliterative verses in Anglo-Saxon that ignore all the rules and conform to modern syllabic counting and modern rhyme. One about a seafarer who succumbed to a mermaid is too long to quote. But the tune to which the other is set may be recognised by its last stanza, which can serve as a tailpiece (Caedmon's Hymn up to date):

Uton singan scirne sang,
herian Beorc and byrcen cynn,
lare' and lareow, leornungmann -
sie us sæl and hæl and wynn!
Ac sceal feallan on þæt fyr
lustes, leafes, lifes wan!
Beorc sceal agan langne tir,
breme glæme glengan wang!

This essay was destined for the present volume, according to the information I have from Dr Helen Cooper. I am very grateful to her for letting me know of the existence of the essay, and to Professor Peter Heyworth, as Professor Bennett's literary executor, for allowing me to use it here. I received the piece in the form of a handwritten script for a lecture: I have amended one or two passages appropriate only to the original occasion and to oral delivery, and developed the footnotes largely from the hints provided. I have left out nothing merely because it was indecipherable. (*Editor's note.*)

NOTES

1 But note the redating of the earlier (Caligula) MS to which E.G. Stanley draws attention in "Laȝamon's antiquarian sentiments", *Medium Ævum* 38 (1969) pp.23-37.

2 *Early Middle English Verse and Prose*, ed. J.A.W. Bennett and G.V. Smithers (Oxford, 1966; 2nd ed., 1968), poem VIII N, p.127.

3 E.g. by A.T.E. Matonis, in *Modern Philology* 70 (1972-3) pp.91-108.

4 E.g. a short poem from MS Harley 913 printed in *Reliquiae Antiquae*, ed. T. Wright and J.O. Halliwell, 2 vols. (London, 1841-3), II, p.256. For text of "Lenten ys come", see *Harley Lyrics*, ed. G.L. Brook (Manchester, 1948) p.43.

5 *Studies in English Philology in Honor of Frederick Klaeber*, ed. K. Malone and M.B. Ruud (Minneapolis, 1929) pp.362-74; *Historical Poems of the XIVth and XVth Centuries* (New York, 1959) pp.98-102.

6 See T. Turville-Petre, "'Summer Sunday', 'De Tribus Regibus Mortuis', and 'The Awntyrs off Arthure': Three poems in the thirteen-line stanza", *Review of English Studies* 25 (1974) pp.1-14 (p.6).

7 Three are specimens in *Fourteenth Century Verse and Prose*, ed. K. Sisam (Oxford, 1921) pp.152-6; see also the complete edition of Minot's poems by J. Hall (Oxford, 1914).

8 I have documented it in my notes to *Early Middle English Verse and Prose*, p.385.

9 *Wars of Alexander*, ed. W.W. Skeat, EETS, ES 47 (1886) ll.487-9. Orm has "rowst and reord"; the ON "rodd" has been accommodated to OE "reord".

10 Sisam, *ed.cit.*, p.152.

11 Each Scots soldier carried his own bag (*berebag*) of meal. Skelton also was to call the Scots "rough-footed" (*Against the Scots*) in allusion to their brogues of rough hide.

12 See J.A.W. Bennett, "Chaucer's Contemporary", in *Piers Plowman: Critical Approaches*, ed. S.S. Hussey (London, 1969) pp.310-24.

13 See *Chaucerian and Other Pieces*, ed. W.W. Skeat (Oxford, 1897) p.xxvii.

14 See Angus McIntosh, "The Textual Transmission of the Alliterative *Morte Arthure*", in *English and Medieval Studies presented to J.R.R. Tolkien*, ed. N. Davis and C.L. Wrenn (London, 1962) pp.231-40.

15 Or a little later: see Elizabeth Salter, "The Timeliness of *Wynnere and Wastoure*", *Medium Ævum* 47 (1978) pp.40-65.

16 Ed. E. Brock, EETS, OS 8 (1865; revised 1871). Cf. line 3689: "foynes with sperys".

17 E.g. T. Turville-Petre, *The Alliterative Revival* (Cambridge, 1977) p.30. But there is some support for the usual view in the use of the phrase "ryme or geeste" in *Knyghthode and Bataile* (ed. R. Dyboski and Z.M. Arend, EETS, OS 201, 1936) l.1276. Cf. also *Scottish Field* (ed. J.W. Hales and F.J. Furnivall, *Bishop Percy's Folio Manuscript*, Vol. I (London, 1867) pp.212-34; also ed. J.P. Oakden, Chetham Society n.s. 94, 1935), l.416: "A gentleman, by Jesu, that this jest made".

18 *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, ed. J.R.R. Tolkien and E.V. Gordon (Oxford, 1925), 2nd ed. by Norman Davis (Oxford, 1967) l.35.

19 See *Gawain, ed.cit.*, notes, p.72; also *The Poems of the Pearl Manuscript*, ed. Malcolm Andrew and Ronald Waldron (York Medieval Texts: London, 1978) p.208.

20 Giraldus Cambrensis, *Descriptio Kambriae*, I.xii, in *Opera*, ed. J.F. Dimock (Rolls series, 21, 1868), Vol. VI, p.188. The second example is pseudo-Virgil.

21 William Camden, *Remains concerning Britain* (ed. London, 1870) pp.40-1.

22 J.P. Oakden, *Alliterative Poetry in Middle English*, 2 vols., II: *A Survey of the Traditions* (Manchester, 1935). Oakden's lists of alliterative phrases, though not comprehensive, are extremely useful in the present context.

23 Orm has far more alliterative phrases than are recorded by Oakden: see E.S. Olszewska, "Alliterative phrases in the Ormulum", *Leeds Studies in English* 5 (1936) p.50.

24 Sisam, *Fourteenth Century Verse and Prose*, p.38.

25 Printed in Celia and Kenneth Sisam, *The Oxford Book of Medieval English Verse* (Oxford, 1970), no. 80, pp.184-7, where it is entitled "Choristers Training".

26 In the same MS as the previous poem (British Museum MS Arundel 292) but dated later (about 1425-50) by Kenneth Sisam in his edition of the poem, *Fourteenth Century Verse and Prose*, p.169.

27 In his edition of *Scottish Alliterative Poems*, Scottish Text Society, 1st series, 27, 38 (1892-7).

28 Gavin Douglas, *A Selection from his Poetry*, ed. S.G. Smith, Saltire Society (Edinburgh, 1959) p.44.

29 For edition, see note 17 above.

30 Alluded to in Amours, *Scottish Alliterative Poems*, Introduction p.lxxxviii.

31 The Reynes Epilogue, lines 1-4, as printed in *Non-Cycle Plays and Fragments*, ed. Norman Davis, EETS, SS 1 (1970) p.123. (Note the editor's comments on the date of the piece, pp.cxx-cxxiv.)

32 George Hickes, *Linguarum Vett. Septentrionalium Thesaurus*, 2 vols., 1703-1705 (Oxford, 1725: facsimile reprint, Scolar Press, 1970) I, p.180.

33 Max Rieger, "Die alt - und angelsächsische verskunst", *Zeitschrift fur deutsche Philologie*, 7 (1876) pp.1-64.

34 W.P. Lehmann, "The alliteration of Old Saxon poetry" (first published as supplement to Vol. 3 of *Norsk tidsskrift for sprogvidenskap*, Oslo, 1953) in *Der Heliand*, ed. J. Eichhoff and I. Rauch, Wege der Forschung, 321 (Darmstadt, 1973).

35 "The Candle Indoors", *Poems*, ed. R. Bridges, 2nd ed. (Oxford, 1930) p.46.

36 "An Evening Walk" (*Poetical Works*, ed. T. Hutchinson, rev. E. de Selincourt, Oxford, 1946), ll.115, 122-3 (1849 version, p.4).

37 It appeared in *Medium Ævum* 3 (1934) pp.1-6.

38 *The Wanderer* (*Collected Shorter Poems*, London, 1966, p.51). Cf. *Sawles Warde* (ed. R.M. Wilson, Leeds Texts and Monographs III, 1938), ll.319-20, p.34: "his runes and domes þe derne beoð. and deopre þen eni sea dingle".

39 *Times Literary Supplement*, 23 Oct. 1948, p.596.

40 Richard Murphy, *Sailing to an Island* (London, 1963) p.16.

THE CANTERBURY TALES AS FRAMED NARRATIVES

By MORTON W. BLOOMFIELD

Robert Jordan in his interesting book has made the point that "the *Canterbury Tales* . . . invites piecemeal criticism; it also invites the total view. In the equality of these two claims on our attention lies much of the critical problem."[1] Jordan tends to see the historical explanation of this paradox in the Gothic nature of Chaucer's art, the dominant aesthetic mood of the period, wherein "the total form is determined by the accumulation of individually complete elements."[2]The whole can be regarded as a collection of complete parts which involve varying perspectives and unusual juxtapositions, the very opposite of modern "organic" art wherein the parts are at least theoretically subordinate to the whole.

Although I think that the notion of modern art as organic must be qualified and questioned, there is a certain force and validity to Jordan's distinction between medieval and modern art. Modern art expects the parts to be somewhat subordinate to the whole. The dominant stress of New Criticism was on the organic nature of art. This principle applies mainly to certain poets and novelists of the Renaissance and later periods but certainly not to all. The Victorian novelists did not write organically. Many of the 18th century poets did not. On the other hand, some medieval literature is organic - *Gawain and the Green Knight*, for instance, and some of Chaucer. We do not, therefore, have to relate the individual Canterbury tales to the frame in any psychological, symbolic, or dramatic manner, but we can treat them as separate units. We can look at the frame separately as at another part of the poem, as well as a unifying device. We need not be concerned with the dramatic unity of the *Canterbury Tales*. I do not, however, deny that some relation even if not an organic one, exists between the frame and the tales. The former is at least causative and authenticating. As we shall see, it provides the narrative cause for the other narratives, and it attempts to authenticate the stories, that is, to help make the reader or audience suspend their disbelief. This is the usual procedure in most collections of tales. We shall here examine the rather complex background of the frame and its numerous aesthetic functions to see what light this knowledge may throw on Chaucer's general intention. It may help us to learn how Chaucer himself regarded his great masterpiece.

There is a sense, it must, however, be acknowledged, in which the tales - or most of them - are also reflections of their tellers, and this relationship adds another dimension to their complexity

of perspective and meaning. This aspect has, however, been much overstressed by early twentieth-century criticism, an emphasizing which has blurred the structure of the units in their own right. Chaucer is a great psychologist, but he was not the exclusive psychologist-realist and prober of the human heart that modern critics and scholars prodded by early twentieth-century interests have made him out to be. Modern criticism, with its strong mimetic bias, has tended to emphasize character and dramatic incident at the expense of structure and sequence, and it is time to redress somewhat the balance. Chaucer was influenced by the literary and rhetorical tradition as much as by life.[3]

There were many possible precedents for a collection of tales more or less unified in some way, and before we proceed further we should glance briefly at some of these collections. As Nevill Coghill has pointed out,[4] Chaucer's idea of a collection was novel and original, but he could also have been indebted to predecessors. He certainly would have relied in some way, no matter how original his idea was, on the tradition of a collection of tales to interest readers. We must then look at several possible exemplars.

Before we go into some detail, it is important to note the religious and moral suggestions which a collection of tales would connote to readers in fourteenth-century England. Not all of Chaucer's models are religious, but the really popular collections of tales had a didactic purpose. Collections of saints' lives, of fables, of miracles of the virgin, and of exempla for sermons certainly provided the fundamental exemplars for Chaucer and even Boccaccio. These collections had a practical purpose and came into existence for the convenience of religious teachers.

I do not wish to deny that early secular collections like *The Seven Sages* and other Oriental collections may have influenced Chaucer in some way. I think, however, the English audience, even a court audience, would have normally expected a didactic and religious purpose in any collection of tales presented to them inasmuch as these didactic assemblages were the most common type of narrative collections in the period.

The twelfth century for the first time in the West saw the development of collections of tales, tales primarily for the convenience of preaching and devotional purposes. The earlier collections such as the *Vitae patrum* and some hagiographic collections were essentially for monks, making provision for communal and spiritual readings in the monastery. The Moslem world, though these were mainly secular and entertaining, did have collected and framed tales dating from before the twelfth century - notably the *Arabian Nights* (in some of its forms) and *The Seven Sages*. Among Oriental fable collections the Arabic *Kalilah and Dimnah* or *Fables of Bidpai* are also of early date. Nevertheless *The Seven Sages* and *Kalilah* were not translated into Western languages before the twelfth century. Aesopic collections made in classical times and Ovid's *Metamorphoses* were, however, known. The latter at the beginning of book 4 even has three daughters of King Minyas carry on discussions between their tales.

The great upsurge in collections dating from the twelfth and

thirteenth centuries is due, as might be expected, to a demand for moralizing stories as literate and religious audiences increased in size. Collections of tales were useful for preaching friars who turned increasingly to sermons to win over urban audiences. Stories and anecdotes have always been used in teaching but the notion of an organized collection of such, if not new in the West, at least received a new attention. The later Middle Ages is a great period of collected stories - the legends of the Virgin[5] began to appear in the twelfth century, and proliferated until the Reformation; exempla books are very numerous indeed in the same period;[6] great legendaries, especially Jacob of Voragine's *Golden Legend*, flourish; even works on other subjects, like Peraldus' *Summa virtutum et vitiorum*, are infiltrated by exempla; older collections like those of Valerius Maximus and the *Vitae patrum* take on, as their MSS show, a new life in this period. We also find collections of a *De casibus* type wherein tragedies or strictly speaking falls are told, or of a *De illustribus* type wherein brief biographical lists of great people are provided.

It is possible that the Gothic spirit was responsible in part for the efflorescence of an older genre, but there is probably a more prosaic reason at the bottom - sheer convenience. These collections were useful for preachers. The authorities on preaching emphasize the importance of illustrating homiletic points by concrete stories. There is perhaps no "clear-cut treatment of the exemplum"[7] in the *Artes predicandi*, those rhetoric books for preachers, but that its use was strongly urged there can be no doubt.

This passion for collecting also extended to anthologies of poetry and dictionaries of various sorts. Traditionally, in the medieval period, we find classical poetry introduced by the *accessūs ad auctores*[8] in which the circumstances of the composition of the work presented are often given, sometimes in terms of four Aristotelian causes. St Jerome applied what the *Rhetorica ad Herennium* and Cicero's *De inventione* had recommended, an introduction to the beginning of each of his commentaries on the books of the Bible he translated. His example was very influential. We sometimes find brief biographies embedded in *accessūs*. Medieval literary history was conceived of as introductions to particular literary works. This passion extended to the Provencal *razos*, discussions of the external circumstances of composition of poems preceding them in a number of Provencal manuscripts.[9] These are also *accessūs* of a sort. Biographies of these poets, usually separate from the *razos*, abound. The prologue to *Canterbury Tales*, if not all parts of the frame, can be regarded in part as an *accessus*. It exists in part to describe the fictitious authors and the "causes" of the tales themselves.[10]

A distinction should be made between collections of tales with a prologue from the author as a real person and framed tales with a prologue which is also a fiction and which may have, as the *Decameron* and *Canterbury Tales* do, framing interludes. The *accessus* is from the author as a real person. The prologue to the *Canterbury Tales* is an artistic, made-up *accessus*, not a real one.

A frame, besides justifying the tales or collected stories, also exists for authenticating purposes. Most stories pretend to be real, to be "historical" in some sense. Part of the pleasure of a story for a reader or hearer lies in the suspension of disbelief engendered by the claim, open or implied, that the story is true. If the magic of art is to work, it must be true. This feeling that what is told really happened is a very old tradition, almost certainly going back to early oral societies. The host when he describes the Canterbury scheme says that each pilgrim will tell four tales "of aventures that whilom han bifalle" (I, 795), each tale to be about things and matters which really happened. One of the major purposes of the frame, then, is to authenticate the tales - to play the game that the stories are real. Here, as I have elsewhere written, "Chaucer has moved from dream and past history [in his earlier poetry] to a report on the contemporary world and present history . . . We are given a social world in the frame, not an individual's problems or attitudes."[11] The "realism" of the *Canterbury Tales* which lies in great measure in the frame rather than the tales themselves, however, does not arise out of a desire to give us a "true" picture of fourteenth-century life as a medieval Zola might wish to do but to an important degree out of a well-known literary purpose - authentication. The attempt to show the truth of a tale; "it really happened", is its indirect theme. Besides this aim, the genre of collected tales - not only the Gothic spirit - demanded a prologue and sometimes a total frame.

Then, further, the frame is in the form of a supposititious pilgrimage to St Thomas' shrine in Canterbury. This imagery suggests, on a literary level, the pilgrim's report, which is told in the first person, presumably of a personal experience. The pilgrimage notion, besides its obvious religious symbolism, serves as a literary authenticating device for the Chaucer persona. We are all pilgrims on the way to our different Canterburys. Life is a journey to our final homes; and besides, this governing image helps us to suspend our disbelief and listen to a pilgrim's tale, of one who has just made a voyage. A good more or less contemporary report in English is that of Margery Kempe who, in her *Autobiography* tells *inter alia* of her journey to Palestine in Chaucer's period. Most pilgrim's tales are in Latin, but by Chaucer's time, vernacular reports were beginning to appear.[12]

It is also significant for the understanding of the framed tales of the period that the single-centered narrative of early Arthurian romance began to give way in the thirteenth century and even more in the fourteenth to the Arthurian prose cycle type of narrative which is formed by rambling digressions having a common Arthurian background but introducing a vast number of what seem to and may actually be irrelevant stories. The story within the story goes wild and multiplies in a bewildering way. The collections as well as the *Canterbury Tales* are held together by a recognizable purpose or plan, the prose cycles are not. Yet the urge to proliferate tales is there and may also be explained by this later medieval drive to create collections. It is so urgent that Chaucer makes one of his tales, the Monk's Tale, a smaller collection of tales - "little tragedies" - within a larger collection.

All this may be seen in some great late medieval collections. In the fourteenth century, three remarkable men, Juan Ruiz in Spain,[13] Boccaccio in Italy[14] and Chaucer in England took the religious or moralizing genre of collected tales and infused it with new life and vitality in a way that few early secular collections were able to be animated. This is not the place to go into a detailed comparison, but each author had a complex artistic vision, and however different in aims and form produced masterpieces. They diversified their narratives by "retrospection and anticipation",[15] and by subtle shifts in perspective they gave us several worlds held together in a most subtle articulation.

None of Chaucer's predecessors, however, use exactly his device. Nor does any combine the religious and secular attitudes and subjects to the degree he does. Chaucer gives us a spiritual vision both directly and indirectly.

The *Decameron* has no interludes except at the beginning of the whole work and between days. As Robert Pratt and Karl Young point out, "it is clear that the frame of the *Decameron* could not be regarded as Chaucer's model in any precise or thorough-going sense".[16] The *Ameto* and *Filocolo*, both by Boccaccio, especially the *Ameto*, are somewhat closer to the *Canterbury Tales* but even they differ from the latter in significant ways. Sercambi, whose collection of tales used to be considered the closest Italian source of or analogue to the *Canterbury Tales*, now seems out of the running because of a correction in his assumed dates.[17] The *Libro del buen amor* is even less like the *Canterbury Tales* than the Italian examples I have named. We must not forget, of course, Ovid's great collection of tales, especially because Ovid was so popular in the later Middle Ages, but the *Metamorphoses* is fundamentally different in structure from the *Canterbury Tales*.

Art traditionally teaches and amuses. These three masterpieces, the *Libro del buen amor*, the *Decameron*, and *Canterbury Tales*, stress these two aims differently. Chaucer teaches most of all. They all make some use of circumstantial realism for literary ends, but they are all pictures of life only in the most profound sense. They are also partly true to life because the religious tradition out of which they come is true of life. The sermons and penitential books of the Christian tradition are realistic.

Chaucer's notions of dialogue and the elaboration of the role of the persona are too varied in origin to trace here, but they no doubt are part of the complex sense of the world which Chaucer delighted in. Wyclif, Chaucer's great contemporary, said that "pulcra alternacio delectat animam" and that "multi delectantur in loquela dialogi".[18] Chaucer knew too that debate and dialogue delighted the soul. Many of the religious collections of tales had prefaces, but they were written by the author as author, commenting on his collection, praising God and possibly offering reasons and uses for the tales that follow. What Ruiz, Boccaccio, and Chaucer did was to make the prologues and frames linking the tales part of the artistic creation (a very rare device indeed in religious collections, and usually confined to titles). The tales themselves were pushed to a secondary level so to speak. The prologue and

framing links became the setting out of which the tales came. Neither Ruiz nor Boccaccio used the links in as complete a way as nor to the same extent that Chaucer did. An imitation of reality, not an opinion of the author or presumed author speaking in his own person, provided, however, the rationale of the collection for all three.

Chaucer and his Mediterranean colleagues used circumstantial detail of time, place and description in their prologues and frames, and following an old tradition, descriptions of characters and lively dialogue. The circumstantial detail of the frame we have already discussed elsewhere.[19] It is especially presented for its purpose in authenticating. The portrait goes back to the classical world as a literary genre[20] and was recommended by medieval writers on rhetoric and poetics.[21] Dialogue was considered, as we have seen, a proper form for medieval writers to use to increase the delectation of their audiences.

In making something of this genre, these writers then used dialogue, debate, and circumstantial realism to make a complex perspectivism and a rich ironical self-aware sense of life. Each was a maker of a world or worlds. Each "thickened the mixture" and made their audience see the bitter-sweetness of existence.

The frame of the *Canterbury Tales* serves many functions and is not there, as some think,[22] only to serve as an introduction to some attractive tales. It sets the tone for the richness and complexity of human experience presented to us. It authenticates, prepares us for morality and entertainment in various subtle ways. It offers another level of experience, another world out of which the ideal, that is the unreal, world of the tales come. It introduces us to characters of extraordinary range; it universalizes, in a religious sense, the stories; it satisfies the Gothic urge for wholes within wholes; it gives a sense of completeness and plenitude such as suggests on a very small scale God's activity within the world. The practical purposes of an introduction to stories are there, of course, but above all a real act of creation is suggested in which a new world appears made out of the stuff of the old.

The spring setting of the prologue continues the notion of creation, for God was supposed to have created the world in this season. Chaucer, following the medieval rhetoricians, is less concerned with describing spring than with emphasizing its powers (*vires*). The beginning of the poem then suggests creation just as the end suggests the ultimate end of man the pilgrim, and finally of the world. The world of *Canterbury Tales* moves from its own genesis to its final revelation in the Parson's tale and Chaucer's palinode.[23]

The great character of the frame is the host. He is both the speaker for Chaucer and Chaucer's great critic. He is the supposed creator of the scheme of the tales and is the sole judge of it. He is therefore a Chaucer surrogate and at a great remove a surrogate for God. Yet he lacks complete freedom to impose his will as he quickly learns.[24] God also in a mysterious way is limited by his creation, but it is a voluntary limitation for man's good.

When Dryden wrote of the *Canterbury Tales* in his *Preface to the Fables*, "Here is God's plenty", he no doubt had the notion of divine plenitude in the back of his mind as an enlightening metaphor, but he builded better than he knew, for the creation (both *natura naturans* and *natura naturata*) of the *Canterbury Tales* with its encompassing and richly variegated frame is really an artistic parallel to God's creation. Traditionally the variety of the world (its plenitude) has always been taken as evidence of God's goodness which overflows into his creation in a variety of ways and manifests itself in as many forms as possible.

Just as secondary causes operate in the world below, all ultimately dependent on God, the primary cause of all, so secondary causes in the forms of Chaucer's many characters create their own stories. But we who observe the whole scene, who read the tales and frame are aware of a mind behind it all, the controlling guide and spirit, to whose goodness we are indebted - Chaucer the man.[25]

As Charles Owen writes, "the embracing fiction [of the pilgrimage] not only gives a value to most of the narratives more important than any they inherently possess, but it manifests itself frequently within the stories influencing their form, their ideology, their style, their language".[26] The prologue and frame is Chaucer's tribute to and imitation of God's creative activity. Because it is set, unlike Chaucer's other works, in the "real" world, it suggests that we too are characters in a pilgrimage and that we have our little flurries of creation, our narratives as we pass by the way.[27] As Owen has said above, the frame penetrates the stories by creating their form and their rationale. We are then both free and determined, masters and slaves, and our lives are the parameters of innumerable variables in a multidimensional continuum.

A further parallel between Chaucer and the Divine is the retrospective stance, the telling of events after they have occurred. As R. Baldwin pointed out a number of years ago, the scheme of the *Canterbury Tales* demands a Chaucer who has already made the journey to Canterbury and is telling it in retrospect.[28] The pilgrim Chaucer as he tells us of the first meeting of his fellow pilgrims describes them fully, something which could only have been done after he had got to know them. The tale of *Canterbury Tales* is being told after the events, even if not in tranquillity. It is cast in the shape of an autobiographical reminiscence. In this, Chaucer is following a very common tradition in art which uses a retrospective teller - perhaps the best known example to him was the *Divine Comedy*. Dante has already completed or pretended to have completed his whole journey as he sits down to relate it to his audience. Paradise has already been reached before Dante the author sits down to write of hell. Chaucer too must have pretended to have reached Canterbury and even to have returned to London before he turned to write

> Whan that Aprill with his shoures soote
> The droghte of March hath perced to the roote.

In at least this sense then the end is the beginning and the

beginning is the end in a tale in which the teller is an active character. The motto "En mon commencement est ma fin" and its converse are the truth which Christianity and life give us. This kind of reminiscence then in which the whole work is cast into retrospect is a paradigm again of God's creation and the divine attitude to existence. As in life, the end hovers over every act and all is cast in a perspective of double time. The potential pastness of the present continually being forced upon us by the conditions of this act is what gives the present its edge and its tragedy. We can forget this great truth most of the time, just as we do when we read the tales in the *Canterbury Tales* or as the pilgrims do as they tell their tales, but at times the warning bell clangs as the voice of the narrator, of this elvish man Chaucer, is heard above the clamour in measured tones giving us his report of this journey to Canterbury.

The prologue and frame then of the *Canterbury Tales* interpenetrate the tales in many and varied ways and set the conditions for the complex worlds which are revealed. The tales are in another time than the time of the pilgrimage for the pilgrimage is given to us in the persona's retrospective time, *in illo tempore*. In a sense the tales then are lyric interludes or perhaps lyrico-narrative interludes, especially because we are strongly aware of most of the tellers. We are held down by the forces which control us, and yet these forces allow each one of us to tell his tale, to open up for a little while the sequence of something that has happened.

Explanations of the function of the prologue and frame of the *Canterbury Tales* which fall back on the Gothic nature of the late medieval period may to some extent be right. Obviously in some sense the spirit of the later medieval period with its preference for framed painting and framed doorway has some relation to the popularity of the framed collection of tales in the same period and with what Jordan calls "nonorganicist sensibility" so characteristic of Gothic art. Jordan himself is well aware of the difficulties in making precise such parallels. The dispute over whether we can use the term "baroque" or how to use it in discussing seventeenth-century literature is instructive in this matter. Jordan writes, "I do not press the analogy very far".[29]

It is perhaps more helpful in our goal of understanding the function of the frame and prologue in the *Canterbury Tales* to stress what Chaucer was doing in his concept of the tales; how he conceived his own masterpiece. I think the analogy of creation and God was before him deliberately and often. If we like, we may also interpret Gothic cathedrals thus - remembering though that romanesque and baroque cathedrals also aimed at creating God's house on earth and a replica of the creation and its results in salvation history. It is better to think of Chaucer as a divine surrogate in his task than only as a Gothic artist, though certainly no one can object to these analogies if they are helpful.

The poetic world created by the poet is not really *ex nihilo*, as Chaucer would surely not wish to put himself on a level with the real God. He is, however, analogously creating a world or several

worlds, even if using already existing materials. He is creating, to use an expression of M.H. Abrams, a heterocosm,[30] and is suggesting a parallel to the divine activity. The notion of artist as God is implicit in his greatest poems. The idea of the poet as creator only became explicit in the Renaissance. Yet the poet as *vates*, as prophet who is divinely inspired, is very old, older than Homer. But the notion of the prophet-poet as a god probably had to wait on Christianity and the development of Western thought, especially in the Romantic period.

The idea that the poet is a kind of god is implied in the very subject matter of *The Divine Comedy*. The fact that such a journey should be granted to him as it was to St Paul who visited the third heaven was a sufficient guarantee that Dante was specially favoured and was by precept and example made a special imitation of God, who in the form of Jesus made a journey similar in some respects to what his was to be.

With Chaucer the evidence is less clear but none the less impressive. His characters carry their heavens and hells about with them. They are on their way to the heavenly Jerusalem and are fortuitously joined by Chaucer just as we fortuitously join our own contemporaries at our birth. Chaucer is withdrawn and different. He is called upon by the Host twice, is poked fun at by the Man of Law, tells a dull story. All this gives us a sense of his reality and helps to guarantee his artistic truth. He gives us a world which reflects a real world and in which we find new worlds. It presents its own truth. Its epistemological guarantee is Chaucer's own retrospective report.

We can, if we wish, look upon these two narrative levels - the level of the world of fact and the level of imaginative creation - as an imitation of life itself as it is lived. We live in time punctuated by events which take us out of time, our dreams, some of our contacts with others, our hearing stories, our introspective and imaginative moments. The *Canterbury Tales* reflects these two basic levels of life. It lets us enjoy and lament over our scattered introspective and neighbourly moments as well as keep us aware of the pilgrimage, the *via* we are all bound on. We are the pilgrims, the *viatores*, but just as the Canterbury Pilgrims could get away from their journey carried by the wings of narrative, so we can temporarily forget the serious and fundamental passage to Canterbury we are all engaged upon. The relation between the two levels, then, need not be purely psychological, as Professor Kittredge, Lumiansky and many others have thought, but religious and humanist.

Thus, the *Canterbury Tales* with its elaborate frame and its prologue is a prologue to a prologue - our earthly life in its plenitude, variety and multitudinousness. We recognize our world in Chaucer's world and cross in reading it another bridge in "thilke parfit glorious pilgrymage / That highte Jerusalem celestial" (X, 50-1).[31]

We must remember that the pilgrims do not reach Canterbury.[32] It is possible that this failure is due to the accident of Chaucer's death or it may be deliberate. I tend to the latter explanation.

Chaucer may very well have decided before he reached the Parson's or Manciple's Tale not to finish his work as he had originally planned and reduced it to fewer tales, perhaps even as few as one-quarter of the number. Perhaps not. But the cessation of the work before Canterbury is reached is certainly a happy circumstance or notion in terms of the spiritual function of the Prologue and frame, and the necessity of the return to London. The heavenly Jerusalem is certainly not yet reached by the pilgrims, nor indeed us.

The heavenly Jerusalem is the ultimate goal of earthly man and until the end of time will be for all human beings still *in via*. Even more important, only because more immediate, is the emphasis in the *Canterbury Tales* on the journey of life which all who read it must still be on, with its double aspect of the travelling and the experiences within that journey which seem to take us, even if only momentarily, out of time.

NOTES

A somewhat different version of this paper was given, as one in the series of Memorial Lectures in Memory of Elizabeth Salter, at the University of Connecticut, Storrs, on the night of September 10, 1981.

1 *Chaucer and the Shape of Creation: The Aesthetic Possibilities of Inorganic Structure* (Cambridge, Mass., 1967) p.112.

2 P.130. Cf. . . . "The late Gothic ability to maintain contradicting attitudes and to derive aesthetic pleasure from the tension of unresolved conflicts", Larry Benson, "*The Alliterative Morte Arthur*: Medieval Tragedy", *Tennessee Studies in Literature* 2 (1966) p.75.

3 On Chaucer and the rhetorical tradition, see Richard Lanham, *The Motives of Eloquence* (New Haven, 1976) pp.65-81; and Robert Payne, *The Key of Remembrance: A Study of Chaucer's Poetics* (New Haven and London, 1963).

4 See *The Poet Chaucer* (London, 1950) pp.113ff.

5 See H.L.D. Ward in *Catalogue of Romances in the Department of Manuscripts in the British Museum* (London, 1893) II, pp.586-740, especially pp.586-94, and J.H. Mozley, "The Unprinted Poems of Nigel Wireker, An Examination of M.S. Cotton Vespasian D xix, fols.1-53", *Speculum* 7 (1932) pp.398-423.

6 See J.-Th. Welter, *L'exemplum dans la littérature religieuse et didactique du moyen âge*, Thèse . . . de l'Université de Paris (Paris and Toulouse, 1927), especially pp.214ff.

7 Harry Caplan, "Rhetorical Invention in some Medieval Tractates on Preaching", *Speculum* 2 (1927) p.294.

8 On the medieval *accessus*, see Edwin A. Quain, "The Medieval Accessus ad Auctores", *Traditio* 3 (1945) pp.215-64.

9 See the edition by Jean Boutière and A.H. Schutz, *Biographies des Troubadours* (Toulouse and Paris, 1950). (A revised and augmented edition with translations into modern French exists (Paris, 1964).)

10 "Authenticating Realism and the Realism of Chaucer", *Thought* 39 (1964) pp.335-58. On the four causes as applied to literary works, A.J. Minnis presented an important paper at the 1980 meeting of the New Chaucer Society in New Orleans. See also his essays, "Discussions of 'Authorial Role' and 'Literary Form' in Late-Medieval Scriptural Exegesis", *Beiträge zur Geschichte der deutschen Sprache und Literatur* 99 (1977) pp.37-65; and "Late-Medieval Discussions of *Compilatio* and the Rôle of the *Compilator*", *ibid.* 101 (1979) pp.385-421.

11 *Ibid.*, p.348.

12 See Donald Howard, *The Idea of the Canterbury Tales* (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London, 1976), and his *Writers and Pilgrims: Medieval Pilgrimage and Their Posterity* (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London, 1980), to both of which I am indebted.

13 Chaucer may have known Ruiz since we now know that he probably visited Spain in 1366. On their possible relations to each other, see Thomas Jay

Garbâty, "The *Pamphilus* Tradition in Ruiz and Chaucer", *PQ* 46 (1967) pp.457-70. Ruiz may have been influenced by Arab and Hebrew models. The title of his work is *El Libro del buen amor*, a book much less known to the Anglo-Saxon world than the *Decameron*.

14 See Vittore Branca, "Coerenza dell' introduzione al *Decameron*, Rispondenze Strutturale Stilistiche", *RP* 13 (1959-60) pp.351-6o; Joan M. Ferrante, "The Frame Characters of the *Decameron*: A Progression of Virtues", *RP* 19 (1965-66) pp.212-26; and E. De'Negri, "The Legendary Style of the *Decameron*", *RR* 43 (1952) pp.166-89 for attempts to analyze the prologue and frame of the *Decameron* as structure. On framed tales in general, see Hans Lucas, "Zu den Milesiaca des Aristides", *Philologus* LXVI (1907) pp.29ff. (in the ancient world), Otto Löhman, *Die Rahmenerzählung des Decameron, Ihre Quellen und Nachwirkungen, Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der Rahmenerzählung*, Romanistische Arbeiten 22 (Halle/Saale, 1935).

15 Samuel Johnson, "Life of Milton", *Lives of the English Poets*, ed. George Birbeck Hill (Oxford, 1905), I, p.170.

16 See *Sources and Analogues of Chaucer's Canterbury Tales*, ed. W.F. Bryan and Germaine Dempster (Chicago, 1941) p.20. The article on the sources and analogues of the prologue to the *Canterbury Tales* by Pratt and Young is valuable though brief. I am indebted to it in many ways. See also W.H. Clawson, "The Framework of *The Canterbury Tales*", *U. of Toronto Quarterly* 20 (1951) pp.137-54 and Edmund Reiss, "The Pilgrimage Narrative and *The Canterbury Tales*", *SP* 67 (1970) pp.295-305.

17 See G. Sinicropi in *Giornale storico della letteratura italiana*, 191 (1964) pp.548-64 and his edition of G. Sercambi, *Novelle*, 2 vols., Scrittori d'Italia 250-1 (Bari, 1972) (in II, p.801), and Lucciano Rossi, ed. Sercambi, *Il Novelliere* (Rome, 1976), xix-xx.

18 From prologue to his *Speculum ecclesie militantis*, ed. Alfred W. Pollard (London, 1886) p.1.

19 See note 10 above for "Authenticating Realism".

20 See E.C. Evans, "Roman Descriptions of Personal Appearance in History and Biography", *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology* 46 (1935) pp.43-84.

21 See comments by Robert Armstrong Pratt and Karl Young, *op.cit.*, pp.3-5.

22 W.H. Clawson, *op.cit.*, p.137 ("a framework or framing story is to be understood as a narrative . . . composed for the primary purpose of introducing and connecting a series of tales, which are the *raison d'être* of the whole work.").

23 Perhaps this palinode, although a literary convention, echoes somewhat Augustine's words at the end of *De Trinitate* (15, 28), "O Lord, the one God, God the Trinity, whatever I have said in these books that is of thine, may they acknowledge who are thine; if anything of my own, may I be pardoned both by thee and by those who are thine".

24 Charles Owen, "The Problem of Free Will in Chaucer's Narratives", *PQ* 46 (1967) p.453.

25 See Donald Howard's fine article "Chaucer the Man", *PMLA* 80 (1965) pp.337-43.

26 *Op.cit.*, p.451.

27 As Edmund Reiss, *op.cit.*, p.301, suggests, the real pilgrim is the audience to whom the work is addressed.

28 *The Unity of the Canterbury Tales*, Anglistica 5 (Copenhagen, 1955) pp.54-7. This retrospection is characteristic, of course, of many tales and stories.

29 *Op.cit.*, p.xi. The preceding quotation from Jordan is taken from p.241.

30 See *The Mirror and the Lamp: Romantic Theory and the Critical Tradition* (New York, 1953) pp.272ff.

31 I don't think it has been pointed out that there is a certain syntactic or semnatic confusion in these lines. The pilgrimage is not, but the goal is, the heavenly Jerusalem. I do not know why Chaucer (apparently) writes thus. Note the parallel at the end of Augustine's *Confessions* 9.

32 I am indebted to Scott Kennedy of the University of Connecticut, Storrs, for his making me aware of this inconclusive conclusion. Since then, I have become aware of Reiss's article (see note 16 above) p.301 where the point is also made. Reiss also equates the Tabard Inn with Babylon, but there I think he is pushing his allegory too far. Nor does it fit into the general movement of the *Canterbury Tales*. There is no approach to Jerusalem in the progress of the frame or Tales. Appeals to "liminality" don't explain it either.

RICHARD II AND THE MUSIC OF MEN'S LIVES

By PHILIP BROCKBANK

When Richard II, in Shakespeare's play, is approaching the end of his life, he has reason to reflect that the concord of his state and time is shattered:

> How sour sweet music is
> When time is broke, and no proportion kept!
> So is it in the music of men's lives. (5.5.41-3)

We are watching an historical and personal catastrophe, but since we are also approaching the end of one of the most lyrical tragedies of Shakespeare's early maturity, we are also attending to the climax of the poet's harmonious art. Shakespeare, reading the old histories of the disastrous reign of King Richard (perhaps as many as seven of them) and turning them into theatre for our delight, has been making music of men's lives.

An adequate account of the play must attend to the subtle inter-relationships that Shakespeare creates, or re-creates, between the styles of theatrical poetry and historical events, and between the larger processes of human community and the more poignantly focussed, personal processes of the individual life. That the art of the renaissance should invite this kind of critical attention is a sign of its continuity with the art and thought of the middle ages. For Shakespeare, like Boethius, Dante and Chaucer before him, continued to be interested in the ways in which human confusions could be contained within a divine order and an ultimate harmony. The poet, in Chaucer's time and in Shakespeare's (even in our own) is under traditional pressure to satisfy our ethical imaginations, to make art and design out of its representation of muddled passages of life. Thus Dante at the end of the *Purgatorio* is wryly aware that he is obeying both the laws of his poem and the laws of a divine moral dispensation. The *Consolations* of Boethius enable Chaucer to change the perspective of *Troilus and Criseyde* in order that the lovers' human tragedy should be transfigured to divine (and human) comedy.

In her deft analysis of *The Knight's Tale* Elizabeth Salter warns us "not to confuse rhetorical ordering with imaginative";[1] but clear distinctions in this territory are not easy to come by. Theseus (from his reading of Boethius) tries to transcend the lovers' undignified history:

> Thanne may men by this ordre wel discerne
> That thilke Moevere stable is and eterne;
> Wel may men knowe, but it be a fool,
> That every part dirryveth from his hool.
>
> (KT 3003-6)

But, as Elizabeth Salter observes, "Our difficulty does not lie in reconciling the death of Arcite with a divinely ordained plan, but in reconciling the noble account of this plan with the ugly manifestation of divine motives and activities which Chaucer has allowed his poem to give."[2] The perplexities faced by all theodiceans, from classical times, through the Enlightenment of Leibnitz, to the most recent endeavours to vindicate the ways of God to man, recur and persist in insoluble forms, and Shakespeare's *Richard II* is a crucial document in a long tradition. If Chaucer did indeed read his Troilus story to Richard, the king would have had reason to reflect upon his own prospects of looking down from "the holughnesse of the eighthe spere" to contemplate "with ful avysement, / The erratik sterres herkenyng armonye, / With sownes ful of hevenyssh melodie."[3] Bushy in the play speaks of "perspectives which rightly gazed upon / Show nothing but confusion; ey'd awry / Distinguish form" (2.2.19-20). Richard's own story very much needs to be viewed awry to distinguish form.

The play's historicity can, in certain perspectives, be seen to be of a piece with its harmony, inviting us to glance backwards in Shakespeare's art to the fair conjunction of the white rose and the red at the end of *Richard III*, which is itself a glance forward in history to the final end of the "great discord and division" proclaimed by Edward Hall as "the union of the two noble and illustre families of Lancaster and York." Hall's resonant phrases offer a musical resolution of the discords of the reign which has given solace to many since it was first offered to the Tudor public - most recently to those whose responses to Shakespeare's histories have been orchestrated by the late E.M.W. Tillyard. But I wish to look in other directions - towards certain principles at work in the structure of the play, and towards Jean Bodin's ample and complex theories of law, sovereignty and (to return to a phrase from the play) the concord of state and time.

I cannot confidently claim that Shakespeare had read Bodin's *Six Books of the Commonweal* before they were translated from the French by Richard Knolles in 1606 although I think it perfectly possible that he had, but I am concerned with certain convergences and divergences of thought and insight between Bodin's contemplative thought and Shakespeare's theatrical thought. Shakespeare is the poet and playwright of commonwealth, and nowhere moreso than in two musically alert plays of the middle period - *The Merchant of Venice* and *Richard II*.

The Tudor myth of Polydore Vergil's and of Hall's devising is notoriously an instrument of propaganda. In outline it is intended to reassure the subject state of the divine authority of the sovereign figure; Providence has worked to such good purpose that the conflicts of the past are assuaged, the moral and political wounds of the state healed, and under the high and prudent dominion of

Henry VIII, the indubitable flower and very heir of the contending lineages, all will be well.

Bodin's awarenesses are philosophically more spacious, affording an apparently more direct access to the ideology of Renaissance monarchism. "Of the three lawfull Commonweales, that is, a popular estate, an Aristocraticall, and a royall", says Bodin, "a royall monarchie is the best".[4] The royal monarchy satisfies the elegant principle that a body should have only one head, together with some more intricate principles of geometric proportion which are meant to harmonise the multiple inequalities of society.

With the encouragement of the more conservative scholars of the past fifty years, including Theodore Spencer, Lily B. Campbell and Hardin Craig, we would have little difficulty in reconciling Hall's outline of a stabilising Providential process with Bodin's account of a poised and harmonious society. Shakespeare's histories might then be received on much the same terms as the homilies against wilful rebellion. A nostalgic Tudor recollection of Edward III, or even of Hotspur's Richard ("that sweet lovely rose"), might create the illusion that an old divine dispensation had been recovered and restored.

I prefer to allow the imaginative art its own momentum and autonomy, but I wish at the same time to see it engaging with and dislodging the historical myth and the political wisdom from which it derives some of its effects.

Shakespeare's *Richard II* was not the only play of the period to deal with the reign. At least one (reported by Simon Forman) has been lost. But each of the two survivors has its style and modest structure. *Jack Straw* is made to express the grievances of the populace, exploited by usurers in the market place and saved by the solicitude of an innocent king. *Woodstock* is made of a verse answering to the plain-living and plain-speaking virtues that the playwright attributes to his hero. In the sense of the terms that *Richard II* invites, however, they are not lyrical plays; they have no music.

Marlowe's *Edward II*, which has also occasioned comparison with *Richard II*, does have its music - a music that modulates as the poet diverts the flow of our sympathies from the king's victims to the victim-king:

> And there in mire and puddle have I stood
> This ten days space; and least that I should sleep
> One plays continually upon a drum.
> They give me bread and water, being a king.

The words are spoken to that drum-beat. The music is in the indefatigable pulse of life holding on, and it is made out of the historical event, not contemplatively but re-creatively.

Shakespeare's play is about many of the same things as Marlowe's - political assassination, misgovernment, nostalgia for an old chivalric dispensation, royal minions and royal martyrdom but it does not repeat Marlowe's effects. It offers a fuller

manifestation of the nature of historical process and a greater awareness of the significance of style, personal and ideological, in the commonwealth. That historical process, both in the time of Shakespeare and in the time of Richard, was dispossessing the myths of divine kingship even before they could properly establish themselves. The symmetries of Shakespeare's play are related to the fidelity with which he traces this process in the realm and in the consciousness of the king.

In *Richard II* Shakespeare at once re-creates, celebrates, anatomises and repudiates the idea and figure of the divine sovereign. The play realises the pressures of the past upon the present and of the play's present upon England's future. Shakespeare had already written about the Wars of the Roses and in *Richard II* he is aware of their not-too-distant coming on. In *Woodstock* and *Edward II* we may be persuaded that the mess of the realm is the immediate responsibility of those who make it, within the boundaries of the play. In *Richard II*, obscure unstabilizing damage has already been done within the reign but out of reach of the play, the validity of the institution of royal monarchy itself is called in question, and we are made to feel that there can be no going back.

The feat of historical analysis is also a feat of style. For although the style of the play resembles that of others of the same phase (*Romeo and Juliet*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*), it is here used upon historical material to historical advantage. Shakespeare's plays of fifteenth century English history are about the paradoxes attending the exercise of power. In the aesthetically and ethically satisfying speculations of Bodin, power is the ceremonious exercise of high moral authority, in the service of divine and natural justice. In the world that falls under Montaigne's sceptical scrutiny in the *Apology for Raymond Sebonde*, a Pacific island is ruled by a dog - recalled in *Lear* as "The great image of authority - a dog's obeyed in office." (4.6.156-7)

Style of a highly formal kind, enlisting many rhetorical devices and refining the symmetries of the language, is particularly apt in *Richard II* because the play is primarily about the relationship between power and ceremony. It is so constructed that the ceremony which makes "high majesty look like itself" fails as a vehicle of government, an instrument of harmony in the commonwealth, but proves to be a source of solace for the abdicating king. It is politically sterile but personally efficacious.

Prompted by Hall,[5] Shakespeare chose to start his play at the moment when the chronicles tell of Henry, duke of Hereford, presenting a supplication to the king "wherein he appealed the duke of Norfolke in field of battle, for a traitor, false and disloyall to the king, and enemy unto the realm." A "great scaffold" is erected in the castle at Windsor, and the king sits in his "seat of justice" in order to "minister justice to all men that would demand the same, as appertained to his royal majesty." The king commands the constable and marshall of the realm formally to call on appellant and defendant to "shew his reason" or else make peace without delay. Shakespeare's stage is therefore already set in the ceremonious theatre of history. But in what Hall himself calls the "sumpteous

theatre" of the lists at Coventry, the ceremony is arrested, the presiding king abjures it.

Responding to the chronicle material, *Richard II* was probably first played before a stage version of that traditional pageant property, the tournament façade. Evidence of a circumstantial kind might be found in analogues with medieval settings for play and tournament, in more distant analogues from the Netherlands, but - most convincingly - in the play itself: in its deployment of heraldry and of tournament settings, its stylizations of language and its mounting of certain key episodes. In the play's first phase the façade is background for a throne, a display of the rituals of government and of tournament justice, and for the last words of Gaunt, composing a memorial to England's equitable and chivalrous past. The façade may well have carried the devices of Edward's seven sons, the "seven vials of his sacred blood" counted by the duchess in the second scene, devices still to be found (if incompletely) over the main gateway of Trinity in Cambridge. As the play advances, however, the relationship of the action to the façade changes. The splendours and symmetries of public show give place to more intimate episodes of power exercised, mourned, frustrated or abdicated. The play may therefore be said to become less medieval as it advances or, more precisely, less like a Tudor tournament with its inheritance of medieval paraphernalia. In Bodin's terms, it becomes less geometric and harmonical.

Mark Rose (in *Shakespearean Design*, 1972) has shown that the play responds well to chiastic analysis, and it happens that his little pictures of the play's structure offer the same kind of dainty reassurance as Bodin's. But *Richard II*, like all of Shakespeare's plays, is not only a pattern to look back upon, it is also a process to be lived through. And I turn now to the way in which that process is regulated.

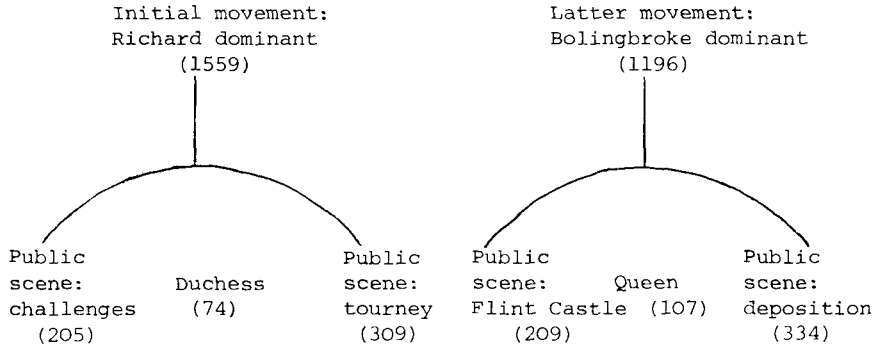
In order to perceive the consonance in the play between the movement of events and the changing significance of theatrical ceremony and of the attendant verbal music, we may compare the three occasions on which appeals are heard before authority: the first and third scenes; the first of Act IV (when Fitzwater and Aumerle appear before Bolingbroke); and the third of Act V (when Aumerle and the Duchess plead for pardon). The appeals are widely spaced but significantly inter-related in the momentum and design of the play and the history.

In the first scene authority in the person of Richard presides from the throne in full decorum, and all who play the game obey its rules. The conventions of tournament are themselves the principal sources of theatrical art. The chronicles offer Shakespeare the appellant styles of speech that he can amplify and refine: "Right dear and sovereign lord, here is Thomas Mowbray duke of Norfolk who answereth and saith, and I for him, that all which Henry of Lancaster hath said and declared (saving the reverence due to the king and his council) is a lie; and the said Henry of Lancaster hath falsely and wickedly lied as a false and disloyal knight, and both hath been, and is a traitor against you, your crown, royal majesty and realm." Shakespeare's rhetorical

amplifications are more spacious than Holinshed's and more hospitable to technical analysis. Puttenham, for example, might have found *merismus* or "the distributer" in Richard's address to Mowbray - "the distribution of every part for amplification sake":

> Mowbray, impartial are our eyes and ears.
> Were he my brother, nay, my kingdom's heir,
> As he is but my father's brother's son,
> Now by my sceptre's awe I make a vow,
> Such neighbour nearness to our sacred blood
> Should nothing privilege him nor partialize
> The unstooping firmness of my upright soul.
> He is our subject, Mowbray, so art thou:
> Free speech and fearless I to thee allow.
> (1.1.115-23)

But it is not mere *merismus*; the amplifications are creating a music of divine authority, a language of command. The music-of-state is in tune with the vocal poise and symmetry, and with the play's structure. The spectacle of this particular scene owes its symmetry to the ascendancy of the throne between contending parties, poised in equal scales. But in a wider span of the play the first scene is itself poised on one side of a point of balance located in the second scene - on a principle that, if Rose is right, operates elegantly throughout the play; Rose decorates his page with patterns like this:



Mark Rose takes more comfort from Pythagoras than I instinctively can; but not, I think, more than Bodin. Bodin's analysis of the harmonies of state comes to rest in analogous diagrams, but only after reflecting upon the dominion of his "wise prince", governing according to the laws of equity and equal poise:[6]

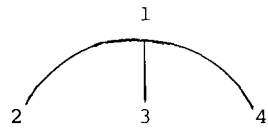
> The wise prince shall set his subjects in a most sweet quiet, bound together with an indissoluble bond one of them unto another, together with himselfe, and the Commonweale. As is in the foure first numbers to be seene: which God hath in Harmonicall proportion disposed to show unto us,

> that the Royal estate is Harmonicall, and also to be Harmonically governed. For two to three maketh a fift; three to foure, a fourth; two to foure, an eight; one to three, a twelft, holding the fift and the eight; and one to foure, a double eight, or *Diapason*: which containeth the whole ground and compasse of all tunes and concords of musicke, beyond which he that will passe unto five, shall in so doing marre the harmonie, and make an intollerable discord.

In the margin at this point Bodin sets a simple diagram, meant to demonstrate the plain aesthetic satisfactions to be derived from royal monarchy:

> Now the sovereigne prince is exalted above all his subjects, and exempt out of the ranke of them: whose maiestie suffereth no more division than doth the unitie it selfe, which is not set nor accounted among the numbers, howbeit that they all from it take both their force and power.

Figures 2, 3 and 4 in Bodin are the three estates: "Ecclesiasticall . . . Martiall . . . and the common people of all sorts . . . as schollers, marchants and labourers."



The tournament, as trial-by-combat, expresses in spectacle and language, an undivided aspiration and allegiance to God, the sovereign, and the martial self. The freedoms that are allowed and taken are contained within the space of the lists. In this play, as in *Romeo and Juliet* and *Love's Labour's Lost*, Shakespeare encourages his audience to be acutely conscious of the arts of language: "The boisterous late appeal", "the accuser and the accused freely speak", "with a foul traitor's name stuff I thy throat", "what my tongue speaks my right-drawn sword shall prove", "giving reigns and spurs to my free speech". But the rhetorical ornament takes on a political and historical significance by exploiting the pace and purpose of trial by tourney - it makes a cavorting temper of language, spurred, curbed or wheeling, to charge or to keep within bounds, as occasion requires. Neither in the chronicle at this point nor in the play is it of any use to probe beneath the bright armour of the style for the circumspect souls of Bolingbroke and Mowbray, for they are contestants in a verbal lists, and ride the language as they ride their horses. We can judge their skills more readily than their causes, and honour seems more at stake than justice.

Had this trial by combat taken place it might have been the

last in Europe's history. As it is, Richard arrests it because he cannot rest secure in the myth of his divinely derived authority, for reasons made plain both in the murmurings about Woodstock and in his sudden appropriation of Gaunt's property. Richard himself does violence to those harmonies of state which the tournament ritual is designed to honour. "A royal Monarch or king," says Bodin, "is he which placed in soveraignty yeeldeth himself as obedient unto the lawes of nature as he desireth his subjects to be towards himself, leaving unto every man his naturall liberty, and the propriety of his own goods." That concern with "natural liberty" and private property might be the cue for a Marxist historian to remark that Bodin had bourgeois motives for proclaiming a royal monarchy, but in the play Richard's offence is against the proper expectations of the dynastic nobility. He takes "from Time / His charters and his customary rights" and dislocates "fair sequence and succession".

The second appeal scene of the play, which virtually opens Bolingbroke's reign in Westminster (IV.i) finds the old harmony marred, and making an intolerable discord. Shakespeare contrives for it an embarrassing decline in the old rhetorical skill. Bolingbroke is no longer playing that game and makes no attempt to compete. His first words are designed by Shakespeare to recall and to dismiss Richard's equivalent words. From the nine lines beginning, "Mowbray, impartial are our eyes and ears" (1.1.115-123), we come to: "Call forth Bagot; / Now Bagot, freely speak thy mind." (4.1.1-2) But Shakespeare makes appellant and defendant persist in the old mode - in first-scene speech - even if they have lost the old mastery.

To measure the distance between harmonies of justice in the first and fourth acts, we may compare two feats of expectoration. This is Bolingbroke, offering to spit in the first scene:

> Ere my tongue
> Shall wound my honour with such feeble wrong
> Or sound so base a parle, my teeth shall tear
> The slavish motive of recanting fear,
> And spit it bleeding in his high disgrace,
> Where shame doth harbour, even in Mowbray's face.
> (1.1.190-5)

And here is Fitzwater, spitting in Act IV:

> I dare meet Surrey in a wilderness,
> And spit upon him whilst I say he lies,
> And lies, and lies. There is my bond of faith,
> To tie thee to my strong correction.
> As I intend to thrive in this new world,
> Aurmerle is guilty of my strong appeal.
> (4.1.74-9)

Puttenham would have found much to deplore in Fitzwater's poverty of invention, and would surely have counted "I say he lies, and lies and lies" among the vices of speech. But we can't from this evidence

accuse Fitzwater of having nodded through the rhetoric lectures of the trivium, we can say only that Shakespeare has relaxed his control of ceremonious hyperbole in order to make the squabble uglier and its energies more arbitrary and dangerous, and to make Bolingbroke's laconic interventions more decisive than Richard's elaborate ones could have been. The play's structure has changed its music. We are no longer being invited to enjoy appellant rhetoric in a fan-vaulted monarchy: we are being invited to keep our ears tuned for the new language which makes Bolingbroke "thrive in this new world". His brevities cut like sword-thrusts through the embroidered, tarnished, fabric of the old speech, while gauntlets shower absurdly about his feet.

The effect won from the words is won again by the spectacle. Richard in the first scene presided from the throne, Bolingbroke in this dominates from the stage platform; he dominates without presiding, and it is only when he has done what he wants to do that he moves, casually, "in God's name" to "ascend the regal throne". Power has been exercised but ceremony slighted. Carlisle's impressive protest (the Ecclesiastical estate still speaks the old language) is against the exercise of power without the ritual authority to endorse it:

> What subject can give sentence on his king?
> And who sits here that is not Richard's subject?
> (4.1.121-2)

The rest is a familiar re-statement of what are sometimes, mistakenly, supposed to be the unchallenged dominant Elizabethan assumptions about the nature of monarchy:

> Shall the figure of God's majesty,
> His captain, steward, deputy elect,
> Anointed, crowned, planted many years,
> Be judg'd by subject and inferior breath,
> And he himself not present (4.1.125-9)

- to which the unmusical answer is, "Yes". The figure of God's majesty is a cypher; power now belongs to the platform, not to the throne and the façade. When Richard is called in, it is not in response to Carlisle's eloquence, but to serve Bolingbroke's laconically expressed purpose, "So we shall proceed without suspicion."

The third appeal, Aumerle's before Bolingbroke in Act V Scene 3, has often been cut from performance. In this scene authority becomes casually peremptory and all ceremony turns to farce. The king is musing upon his prodigal son who prefers the stews in London to the triumphs in Oxford, when he is broken in upon by the stage-direction, "*Enter Aumerle amazed*", and responds, "What means our cousin that he stares and looks so wildly?". Bolingbroke dismisses the court but Aumerle still won't talk until the door is locked. "Have thy desire", says the king - another shoulder-shrugging brevity, humouring his mad cousin, and speaking the distance between Henry's possession of power and Richard's. Then York hammers on the door.

Any attempt to make the next exchanges tense and solemn is liable to miscarry. York shouts a breathless warning through the door, "Thou hast a traitor in thy presence there", and Bolingbroke, according to Dr Johnson's stage-directions, draws his sword as he cries, "Villain, I'll make thee safe". Then York, "Open the door or I will break it open", and Bolingbroke lets him in, "What is the matter, uncle? Speak, recover breath; tell us how near is danger That we may arm us to encounter it." The effect of the king trying to keep his crazy relatives under domestic control is inescapable. I doubt if Bolingbroke is even carrying a sword (he speaks to York as if he is unarmed) and to draw it over Aumerle who, the dialogue tells us, is on his knees in abject terror, cannot but be gratuitously comic. Bolingbroke keeps his new-style dignity well enough, but the scene is also a valediction to the old style. York treats the new King as he did the old, and the new King for a moment plays the old part;

> Thou sheer, immaculate, and silver fountain
> From whence this stream through muddy passages
> Hath held his current and defil'd himself
> (5.3.61-3)

but not for long. There is more banging on the door, and another frantic voice: "What ho, my liege, for God's sake let me in!" and Bolingbroke: "What shrill-voiced suppliant makes this eager cry?" answered: "A Woman, and thine aunt, great King; 'tis I!" At this point we hardly need Bolingbroke to tell us that "Our scene is altered from a serious thing / And now changed to "the Beggar and the King." "My dangerous cousin", he says to Aumerle (who may be still on his knees), "let your mother in." And mother comes, recovering breath enough to re-enact for the last time, the antique proprieties in the rhetorical music of Richard's reign. "A God on earth thou art", she says at last. That extravagant claim about monarchy is given an appropriate but distinctly absurd human context; the king can spare her son ("such is the breath of kings") and therefore deserves these orisons. But they count for nothing; Aumerle was spared before his mother arrived, and his father's persistence in the old rigour grows fatuous ("Speak it in French, King, say 'pardonne moy'"). The God on Earth has to silence the Duchess's intricate antithetical eloquence - "Good Aunt, stand up", he says, twice, as he turns aside to cope with his "trusty brother-in-law" and the rebel abbot. It is an extraordinary episode, but, as the last of the appeal-scenes, its function in the play's structure is clear if not crucial.

To compare these three scenes is to attend to one of the large extra-personal movements of the play. Ceremonies of government, with their attendant verbal music, however decorous and impressive at the start, are shown to be impotent and farcical at the end. The increasingly manifest political impotence of Richard's elaborate machinery and style of government entails a continuing but almost unseen gravitation of power and allegiance to Bolingbroke. I call this movement unseen and impersonal because Richard's abdication of the throne and Bolingbroke's abdication of ceremony are not explicitly motivated; they are responses to an historical inheritance. The play

is obscure about Bolingbroke's ambition. He enlists the support of the people and returns from Ireland not "for England" but "for Lancaster". We are not allowed to see the gathering armies of the rebels; there are no battles, no riots, no street-scenes. There is just the sense of a dissolving false order, which grows with the discovery that Richard's authority is merely a show, a pageant, like the stage-setting, like the language, and indeed like the play itself.

Take, for example, another of the play's more modest scenes - where Bolingbroke confronts York at Berkeley Castle. The question which we might think of urgent importance - did Bolingbroke come for Lancaster or England? - is hardly asked and the play supplies too few data for an answer. "The noble Duke hath sword his coming is but for his own" (2.3.148-9), says Northumberland, and York disdains to reply. It is enough that Bolingbroke has the power - power that has gravitated towards him since Richard sought to dispossess him of his property; and power cannot for long be dissociated from "authority", that is, from acknowledged power.

"Well, well," says York, "I see the issue of these arms. / I cannot mend it, I must needs confess". York's impotence is not merely a manifestation of his personal "character" - although it is that - but also a comment on his public predicament - one that is made representative of this particular moment of English history. York, like Gaunt, epitomises age, weakness, and a nostalgia for an England in which, to return to an earlier formulation, government would be the ceremonious exercise of high moral authority. First the weakness: "Because my power is weak and all ill left"; then the nostalgic, ceremonious assertiveness, authority looking for divine sanction but lacking military power:

> But if I could, by Him that gave me life,
> I would attach you all and make you stoop
> Unto the sovereign mercy of the King. (2.3.155-7)

and finally, a collapse to unceremonious simplicity, directly meeting the human situation:

> But since I cannot, be it known unto you
> I do remain as neuter. So, fare you well;
> Unless you please to enter in the castle,
> And there repose you for this night. (2.3.158-61)

York's plight is in part a moral one; he sees Richard's injustice ("I have had feelings of my cousin's wrongs"); but it can find no moral solution. Once the new king is crowned he will try, comically and eccentrically, to make high majesty look like itself. Government, therefore, finds less and less use for harmonies of speech and ceremony as the play advances. But it does not follow that Shakespeare finds less and less use for them. On the contrary, through Gaunt and through Richard, through York, the Duchess of Gloucester, and the Queen, and even through the gardeners and the groom, he diverts them to a different end. Ceremony, the play reveals, may be politically spent at this historical moment, but it

remains a vehicle of emotional solace.

In the geometry of Rose's *Richard II* certain scenes are called "private", and this in itself might suggest a line across his roving arcs, below which hides the intimate as distinct from the public self. But, alas for diagrammatic thought, the intimate motives of the self are often active in public scenes, while private scenes yield public truths of comprehensive consequence. Like Philomel in *Lucrece* (1121-41) the Gaunt of the play's second - private - scene, still finds "frets upon an instrument" to "tune our heart-strings to true languishment" when his "deep groans the diapason hear" for the state of England, in the scene of his death. The banishments of Bolingbroke and Mowbray occasion much consolatory eloquence, with Mowbray evoking the vocal music whose solace exile will deny him:

> The language I have learnt these forty years
> My native English, now I must forgo
> And now my tongue's use is to me no more
> Than an unstringed viol or a harp,
> Or like a cunning instrument cas'd up
> Or being open, put into his hands
> That knows no touch to tune the harmony.
> (1.3.159-65)

Gaunt and the Duchess still know how to tune the harmony. In the scene played between them we glimpse the hidden significance of the spirited exchanges that make the first scene. The Duchess hopes that justice will be done in the ceremonious trial of strength in Coventry: "Be Mowbray's sins so heavy in his bosom, / That they may break his foaming courser's back." But that kind of moral gravity is an indulgence of feeling; there is no real hope in it; nor any reassurance in the quiescent pieties of Gaunt:

> God's is the quarrel; for God's substitute
> His deputy annointed in His sight,
> Hath caused his death; the which, if wrongfully
> Let Heaven revenge; for I may never lift
> An angry arm against His minister. (1.2.37-41)

These are not, as they occur, the unequivocal moral and political positives of the play; although they have a representative quality and remind us of clusters of Medieval and early Tudor beliefs about the sanctity of the throne and the efficacy of the lists as providential justice. They are not only in the play, they are also in character. And the character of Gaunt in this scene and through to his last, is made up of a sequence of speeches about old-age, impotence, quiescence, disease, guilt and decay. This "character" is used by Shakespeare to structural purpose, disclosing the moral exhaustion masked by the pageant rhetoric of the first scene. The scene works as the play works, moving from an authoritative to a consolatory ceremonious music of speech. Compare the Duchess's first speech with her last:

> Finds brotherhood in thee no sharper spur?
> Hath love in thy old blood no living fire?
> (1.2.9-10)

with

> Yet one word more - grief boundeth where it falls
> Not with an empty hollowness, but weight.
> (1.2.58-9)

The spent spirit plays itself out in subtle verbal quibbles. The rhetorical figure that puns upon "empty hollowness" and "weight" was known as *Atanaclasis*, or in Puttenham's English, "The Rebound", "alluding to the tennis ball which being smitten with the racket rebounds back again". Thus the figure plays upon itself, and is still rebounding in the last lines where "hollowness" is still a dominant effect in the cadence of the verse and in the "empty lodgings and unfurnished walls / Unpeopled offices, and untrodden stones" of Plashy.

The play's second act, largely about the dying Gaunt, opens with an eloquence which is about eloquence: "O, but they say the tongues of dying men / Enforce attention like deep harmony". Gaunt's prophecy culminates effects built up in the first act. Shakespeare insinuates into it the chroniclers' and the *Woodstock* author's indictments of the reign - the "farming" of the realm, the blank charters, and other marks of Richard's ineptitude and importunity. But it is also, and equally, an heroic exhortation recalling England's fading greatness. Those felicities about the "demi-paradise" and the "silver sea" belonged then, as now, to an age other than the dramatic present, and to a rarer dimension than the solid geometry of political history. What is solid and actual is the nostalgia itself. For Edward III's reign was remembered by the chroniclers and by the anonymous playwright, as the heyday of English chivalry. The deep harmonies of language about which and through which Gaunt speaks are related to the harmonies of state which were thought to be a reality in the time of Edward but ceased to be so in the time of Richard. A chivalrous age and the harmonies of its language are, we are made to feel, dying together - betrayed, violated, leased out.

But Gaunt's eloquence has a personal as well as a political function. It is not only condemnatory of the living, it is also consolatory to the dying:

> The setting sun, and music at the close,
> As the last taste of sweets is sweetest last,
> Writ in remembrance of things long past.
> (2.1.12-14)

"More are men's ends mark'd than their lives before", says Gaunt. We allow the claim for him as we must later allow it for Richard himself. He makes a self-consciously good end: "Will the king come, that I may breathe my last?", and is made to fulfil the rôle that one tradition requires of a dying statesman - he makes music at the

close.

What is true of the secondary figures of the play is more commandingly true of Richard. He too, but in a different range of senses, is an impotent figure; incapacitated not by guilt, age and disease, but by culpable innocence, fecklessness and vanity. York redeems himself by acting the perfect subject, to either king; the Duchess by acting out her threnody of grief; Gaunt by playing the part of dying prophet. Richard redeems himself, in his own eyes, and before his court and theatre audiences, by fulfilling the kingly roles that circumstance requires him to play.

First he plays the king in office - the megaphonic voice of authority, the president of the lists. Off the throne he plays the impulsive, reckless sophisticate, the man of "wicked and naughty demeanour" described in the chronicles, who bungles the Irish business, grabs money and jeers at Gaunt. The spoiled-patrician-child posturings of the "natural" Richard are themselves theatrical. This is the second rôle that mars the harmony of the first and makes intolerable discord.

When Richard returns from Ireland, however, the boyish petulance is shed. Little by little, through the superb self-dramatisations of the third and fourth acts, he comes to dominate our imaginations in his role as abdicating king. We discover that, whatever the political vanity of "thrice gorgeous ceremony" it opens immense perspectives of solace. His language entertains the great medieval themes - the wheel of fortune, *contemptus mundi*, the dance of death and the sanctity of sovereignty - whose resonances make it paltry to be Bolingbroke. Richard's glorious angels cannot contend against Bolingbroke's "hard bright steel" but his voice and bearing still command the theatre. "Yet looks he like a king!", York cries when Richard appears on the walls of Flint castle, and throughout the scene Shakespeare turns spectacle into word to vindicate him. The sun-king is ummoved (as we all are) by Northumberland's politic reassurances ("His glittering arms he will commend to rust") but lets the sun-metaphor itself proclaim the truth - "Down, down, I come, like glist'ring Phaëton, Wanting the manage of unruly jades." Bolingbroke refuses to hear; he is deaf to the king's music. "What says his majesty?" "He speaks fondly," says Northumberland, "like a frantic man, Yet he is come." *Richard II*, the play and the king, open up that space between political truth and imaginative truth which continues to interest Shakespeare in *Antony and Cleopatra*. But when the great king-metaphors have served their turn as aesthetic and imaginative solace to the man Richard, there is nothing more they can do. They cannot salvage his power or stop him from sharing other men's vulnerabilities. Like Gaunt's vision of England, Richard's magical sovereignty is nostalgic and cannot be effective.

His public self-dramatisation reaches its climax when he compares himself to Christ: "Did they not sometimes cry 'All hail' to me? So Judas did to Christ." These are the words that prompted Dover Wilson to speak of "Shakespeare's miracle play". But the miracle play is not Shakespeare's precisely, but Richard's. Shakespeare probably got the idea from Holinshed's comments on the King's flatterers. Bushy, he says, "invented unused terms, and such

strange names as were rather agreeable to the divine majesty of God, than to any earthly potentate." Yet the miracle-play pose is moving because as an abdicating king Richard still speaks for and from his office, and because the claims he makes for his sacred status are consciously ironic, made in the course of discovering his own weakness. Richard remembers the coronation ceremony and, as it were, plays the film backwards:

> I give this heavy weight from off my head,
> And this unwieldy sceptre from my hand.
> (4.1.204-5)

Through another rhetorical figure - this time *anaphora* - poet and king together unweave the spell that the ritual had once cast:

> With mine own tears I wash away my balm
> With mine own hands I give away my crown,
> (4.1.207-8)

returning the king to his humanity. The king, said Tudor law, with one of its voices, had two bodies.[7] The doctrine was a convenient one for lawyers and court advisers, but in the perspectives of Shakespeare's play it is allowed no final validity. The political body is the community; the human body is not sword-proof; and the divine body is an illusion, however powerful its spell upon the imagination.

Richard's final role is, like Gaunt's, to make a good end. In the abdication scene Richard plays what he calls a "woeful pageant" to a court audience - much as his own story might have been played in fact before Henry VIII. But at Pomfret he is without an audience. He plays to himself, in private, become mere man. His isolation is established before we see it, when he bids goodbye to the Queen:

> I am sworn brother, sweet,
> To grim necessity; and he and I
> Will keep a league till death. (5.1.20-1)

That heroic commitment to the inevitable sounds a stoical note in Richard's closing music. Chaucer's Theseus too had found it wisdom "To maken vertu of necessitee" (KT 3042) but did not charge his thought with such chivalric irony. The Queen's response recalls Gaunt on "men's ends" ("The lion dying thrusteth forth his paw / And wounds the earth, if nothing else, with rage / To be o'erpower'd.") And there shortly follows York's talk of the procession through London, using a theatre image to express the contempt the public feel for one whose role in public spectacle has been usurped; but Richard remains the "well-graced actor" and his last soliloquies are histrionic still.

The Pomfret speeches are rich in an extreme mode of self-dramatization:

> My brain I'll prove the female to my soul,
> My soul the father, and these two beget
> A generation of still-breeding thoughts. (5.5.6-8)

The king's mind mimics the playwright's and the players':

> Thus play I in one person many people,
> And none contented; (5.5.31-2)

and while the ironies are sardonic and self-directed, they are also bringing Richard's consciousness right into the centre of our final experience of Shakespeare's play. The virtuosity of Richard's thought is both his solace and ours:

> How sour sweet music is
> When time is broke, and no proportion kept!
> So is it in the music of men's lives.
> And here have I the daintiness of ear
> To check time broke in a disordered string;
> But for the concord of my state and time
> Had not an ear to hear my true time broke.
> I wasted time and now doth time waste me.
> (5.5.42-9)

The solace is in the symmetry, in the equal poise of that last line. But it is also in the imaginative art which puts political disorder into a satisfying verbal order. Shakespeare, to return to my beginning, making his plays out of Hall and Holinshed, is making music of men's lives.

Yet Shakespeare's music bids farewell to Hall's and Bodin's; there is no prospect of geometrical harmonies of state being restored on the old terms. To adapt Elizabeth Salter's words on Chaucer's Theseus, neither Hall's nor Bodin's accounts of the divine plan can be reconciled with its ugly manifestations in the history of Richard's reign. Out of an episode of bad government Shakespeare has nevertheless made a good play, and history has provisionally been made to yield an aesthetic form. The plays to come in Shakespeare's theatre will make fresh but equally transient treaties *between authority, soldiery and the populace in the common weal.* And plays to come will attend afresh to the tragic processes shadowed by the Bishop of Carlisle: "Disorder, horror, fear and mutiny / Shall here inhabit, and this land be called / The field of Golgotha and dead men's skulls." The catastrophe courses of history are another story, but after the play of *Richard II* we can say that the ritual allegiance that Carlisle is asking for cannot in itself avert them.

NOTES

1 *Chaucer: The Knight's Tale and The Clerk's Tale* (London, 1962).

2 *Op.cit.* p.31.

3 *Troilus and Criseyde*, V. 1809-12.

4 Jean Bodin, *The six bookes of a commonweale.* Translated out of the French and Latine copies by R. Knolles, London, 1606 (STC 3193) p.700.

5 The chronicle material for *Richard II* is selectively reprinted in *Narrative and Dramatic Sources of Shakespeare*, Vol. III, ed. Geoffrey Bullough (London, 1963).

6 Bodin, *op.cit.* p.790.

7 See Ernst Kantarowicz, *The King's Two Bodies* (Princeton, 1977). Kantarowicz found one of his starting points in Dover Wilson's *New Shakespeare* edition of *Richard II*.

APOCALYPTIC STYLE IN *PIERS PLOWMAN* B XIX – XX

By E. TALBOT DONALDSON

It is probably redundant to try to add anything to the elegant icing that Robert Adams has placed on Morton Bloomfield's well-baked apocalyptic cake,[1] but at the risk of being supererogatory I should like to consider briefly the possible relation of St John's Revelation to the last passus of Langland's poem. There are many ways in which the style of the ending of *Piers Plowman* does not resemble that of the Apocalypse. Langland, as has often been observed, is the least visual of poets,[2] while St John is intensely pictorial, even though it may be hard to adjust on the screen of one's imagination such an image as that of "a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars" (xii.1, King James Version), or to sort out the anatomy of the destroying locusts and various other beasts. But the images, while opulent to the point of extravagance, tend to be static and hence discontinuous in action, like a number of still photographs of a fast-moving event flashed successively on the screen. This has its own nightmarish effectiveness, as can be seen in the account of the woman clothed with the sun (xii 1-7):

> And she being with child cried, travailing in birth, and pained to be delivered. And there appeared another wonder in heaven; and behold a great red dragon, having seven heads and ten horns, and seven crowns upon his heads. And his tail drew the third part of the stars of heaven, and did cast them to earth: and the dragon stood before the woman which was ready to be delivered, for to devour her child as soon as it was born. And she brought forth a man child, who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron: and her child was caught up unto God, and to his throne. And the woman fled into the wilderness, where she hath a place prepared of God, that they should feed her there a thousand two hundred and threescore days.

A huge dragon in violent motion stood (? quietly) before a woman in labour, waiting to devour her child. The child was born, and was to rule all nations, and was caught up to the throne of God. The woman fled to the wilderness, where they (who?) should feed her for a long period in a place that God has prepared for her. It is as though some of the stills were out of sequence, while others have been lost. Yet, partly because of the dislocation, one feels that one has been given glimpses of events of awful importance - made,

perhaps, more awful by the fact that, despite the clarity of some of the individual pictures, one only half understands what is going on.

Instead of a series of clear but discontinuous pictures, Langland presents the reader with a series of half-formed images pursuing one another with enormous, seemingly uncontrolled speed. With this technique he achieves very much the same effect as the Apocalypse does of violent events rushing toward a dreadful resolution. Thus in Passus XX.121-39 Covetousness, fighting for Antichrist, performs at top speed a bewildering number of actions which are presumptively military at base, but often merely violent, and sometimes only subversive. He armed himself - most unpictorially - in avarice and "lived hungrily",[3] using as a weapon "all wiles to win and to hide"; he beguiled the people with deceits and lies, and was asked by *Simony* to assail *Conscience*; the two of them "pressed on the pope" and made prelates to hold with Antichrist in order to preserve ecclesiastical revenues. Then Covetousness came to the King's Court like a keen baron and "knocked" Conscience in court before them all, caused Good Faith to flee and False to remain, and boldly "bore down with many a bright noble" much of the wit and wisdom of Westminster Hall. And after that (134-7)

> He Iogged to a Iustice and Iusted in his eere
> And ouertilte al his truþe wiþ "tak þis vp amendement."
> And tornede Cyuyle into Symonye, and siþþe he took þe
> Official.

One must feel sympathy for scribes (and editors) who have to make up their minds whether the two scoundrels "pressed on the pope" as in the C-manuscripts or, as all B-manuscripts agree, "preached to the people", and also whether Covetousness "knocked" Conscience (C-MSS) or "knelt to" him (B-MSS). There is no underlying pattern of visual imagery in Covetousness' actions: they hardly seem to be seen, and are related mostly by the spirit of violence, which receives its impulse from the presumptive image of warfare. The quoted lines, in which the poet modifies the original idea of a battle between armies into one of a tournament, do begin with a visual image, but it would take the imagination of a Bosch to visualize Covetousness riding up to a justice and jousting in his ear; and if the tournament imagery is continued in *ouertilte* (as OED suggests),[4] it is difficult to imagine what the overturning of a justice's integrity by the offer of a bribe looked like in the lists. The turning of Civil into Simony scarcely seems a half-image, and the "taking" of the official so little an image that I have not the least idea of what it means. Yet amid the furious energy of Langland's context few readers are probably bothered by the lack of fully formed images, any more than they are when the woman clothed with the sun in the Apocalypse suddenly flies with the wings of a "great eagle" away from the serpent, whose attempt to drown her is foiled when the earth swallows the waters he casts from his mouth. While the techniques of the two writers differ, they both convey so great a sense of urgency that the reader assumes it to be natural that he is not given the opportunity to impose his own logical analysis on the narrative. Both achieve the same sense of a world

in violent dissolution, doom not only impending but in process - though, within the scope of each prophetic work, necessarily postponed.

Indeed, the repeated deferment of the dreadful end seems, both in the Apocalypse and in Langland, to make its coming the more imminent. To the cursory reader, the avenging angels of the Apocalypse may seem to have destroyed so many third parts of creation before the end of the book as to leave intact a very small fraction for the Last Day, but of course in the interstices between the acts of destruction humanity and its evil seem able to reproduce with great fecundity. Reprieves and tergiversations are characteristic of Langland's last passus as well. In XIX, Pride and his forces are about to overwhelm Unity when the repentance of the commons turns it into a fortress capable of withstanding the assault. In Passus XX, just as Antichrist's army is about to defeat Conscience's forces, Kind, responding to Conscience's summons, decimates the besiegers: the famous passage (80-6) describing the dreadful ailments Kind visits upon Antichrist's followers is Langland's most distinctively apocalyptic piece of writing, matching the cosmic sweep of St John's imagination. But after Kind's fearful victory over erring humanity, "those few that were alive" continue the attack until Elde is summoned to repel them again. Then the assault is renewed in an altered form until Unity is finally taken by the subversions the Friars practice.

The urgency of impending events is heightened in both works by their violation of time sequence. In the passage from the Apocalypse quoted above we are told that "the woman fled into the wilderness, where she hath a place prepared of God, and they should feed her there"; the second two verbs here suggest a transition from vision to prophecy. Similarly, the woman's child who was to rule all nations with an iron rod is caught up to God's throne, but whether before or after his rule is not clear. One of the prophecies of the Apocalypse is that "there should be time no longer" (x.6), and the action is suited to the word: prophecy of the future fulfills itself by becoming a vision of the past, and vice versa. Thus the vision of the locusts (ix.3-6) shifts suddenly from preterite to future: the locusts were commanded to hurt those persons "who have not the seal of God in their foreheads", not killing them, but tormenting them for five months. "And in those days shall men seek death, and shall not find it; and shall desire to die, and death shall flee from them. And the shapes of the locusts were, etc." The five-month torment leaps out of a narrative of the past to become a prophecy of the future, though the locusts that perform it revert at once to the past. Similarly, the angel with the book prophesies the death and non-burial of two witnesses, but the prophecy suddenly becomes a past event (xi.10-11): "And they that dwell upon earth shall rejoice over them [the unburied bodies]. And after three days and a half the spirit of life from God entered into them, and they stood upon their feet" - and the prophecy continues as preterite narrative. Of course, St John was in actual fact prophesying a number of events that had already occurred in history. But this does not alter the effect produced by the mingling of past and future, a foretaste of eternity

and, in context, an eternity of chaos. One wonders whether Milton might not have been making a bow to this aspect of prophetic vision when in Book XI of *Paradise Lost* he has Michael give Adam a vision of future history through the Flood, and then in Book XII has Michael prophesy subsequent history in his own words - thus dividing, as it were, prophetic vision into its elements of vision and prophecy.

At one point Langland directly imitates this technique of mixing time elements. He is describing how Life (i.e., erring humanity) recovers from the onslaught of Kind (XX.148-51):

> Thus relyede lif for a litel fortune
> And priked forþ wiþ pride; preiseþ he no vertue,
> Ne careþ noȝt how Kynde slow and shal come at þe laste
> And kille al erþely creature saue conscience oone.

The first two verbs in the passage are simple preterites expressing past action in the narrative: thus, for a bit of good luck, Life rallied and rode forth with Pride. But the second verb of the second line, while possibly an historical present, seems more like the true present of a universal generalization, as does the first verb of the third line: Life praises no virtue nor does he care how Kind slew (earlier in Langland's story), nor - moving on to the future of prophecy - how Kind shall come and kill every earthly creature. As in the Apocalypse, the narrative time frame breaks under the pressure of prophecy.

Another kind of manipulation of time occurs more strikingly in Langland than in the Apocalypse, though it is not alien to the latter. This is the yoking of verbs expressing quickly accomplished action with those presupposing duration. Thus Life "leapt aside" and took a mistress, upon whom he begot Sloth, who grew "wonder yerne" and was soon of age, and who married one Wanhope, a wench of the stews. All this occurs within the space of thirteen lines, and one would not be surprised if Life and his mistress became grandparents in the fourteenth, though the attack on Unity is nowhere made to appear like a leisurely siege of Troy. A similarly licentious use of time occurs in the line referred to above that introduces Covetousness to the army of Antichrist: Covetousness armed himself in avarice and "lived hungrily". To put on that piece of the armour of Antichrist, avarice, is the work of a moment, but to live hungrily implies long duration. That the effect is one that Langland strove for is suggested by his modulation here of his earlier introduction of Covetousness, back in Passus V.188-9:

> Thanne cam Coueitise; I kan hym naȝt discryue,
> So hungrily and holwe sire heruy hym loked.

There would have been no temporal disturbance if Langland had written that Covetousness armed himself in avarice and *looked* hungrily and hollow.

Failure to keep separate the literal and metaphorical levels of his allegory is something that Langland has, of course, often been criticized for,[5] and it may be observed sporadically throughout

his work, but most frequently in his last, most apocalyptic passus: indeed, all the stylistic practices I have noted here imply, if they do not always clearly represent, such a failure. But the mixture of levels has its precedent in the Apocalypse, and is seen most strikingly in St John's most influential and most famous allegory, his description of "the great whore that sitteth upon many waters", a woman "arrayed in purple and scarlet colour, and decked with gold and precious stones and pearls, having a golden cup in her hand full of abominations and filthiness of her fornication" (xvii.4). Like her descendant in *Piers Plowman*, Lady Meed, the Scarlet Woman is a personification allegory imagined in purely physical terms. Yet the cup she is holding, while it is as concrete as the purple and scarlet and gold and jewels with which she is adorned, is filled with abstractions, "abominations and filthiness of her fornication". It is as though St John, even though he had introduced the woman as a "meretrix magna", feared that her physical allure might charm the reader, as Will was "ravished" by Lady Meed when he first saw her, and in order to forestall such a reaction St John filled her cup with the abstractions that the concrete allegory is supposed to body forth. He apparently felt that even to fill the cup with "blood of saints, and with blood of martyrs of Jesus", with which, several verses later, he says she was drunk, would not make the primary meaning clear enough. The pressure exerted by the primary meaning on the allegory causes a momentary abandonment of it.

As I said, Langland's tendency to abandon the allegory - or, to put it in another way, to mix the levels of reality of the allegory - is particularly noticeable in his last passus. One may note the following, referring to a group (? of priests) from Ireland who join the assault on Unity: they (XX.225-6)

> . . . shotten ayein wiþ shot, many a sheef of oþes,
> And brode hoked arwes, goddes herte and hise nayles.

A tidier allegorist might have finished the first line with "many a sheef of arwes," and then in the next line given the arrows their allegorical oath-names: one recalls the Lover in de Lorris' *Roman de la Rose* who was shot with the arrows of Beauty, Simplicity, Courtesy, etc. In this case, Langland's mixing of the levels was perhaps partly induced by the common doctrine - expressed by Chaucer's Pardoner[6] - that oaths sworn on the parts of Christ's body physically tear Christ's body apart. Tradition may also have influenced the mixture in this example (XX.304-6), in which Conscience calls for

> . . . a leche þat koude wel shryue:
> "Go salue þo þat sike ben and þoruȝ synne ywounded."
> Shrift shoop sharp salue and made men do penaunce . . . .

Again, we might have expected Conscience to call for a leech that could well salve, since that is what doctors are supposed to do. But of course the body's leech and the soul's leech, cure of body and cure of souls, are inextricably blended in New Testament tradition, and Langland would probably have found it hard to understand a complaint that the last verb of the first line should have

logically been interchanged with the first verb of the second line. The mixture of levels is reinforced by the alliteration, which makes the joining of the two appear almost seamless. For Dr Shrift it is alliteratively natural to perform the medical act of shaping (creating) sharp salve, in order to fulfill the implications of his name, which is that of one who makes men do penance. When Shrift gives way to Friar Flatterer, Unity falls, and the allegory breaks down: Contrition, a personification, forgets to weep and wake for his sins, and (371-2)

> For confort of his confessour Contricion he lafte
> That is þe souerayne salue for alle synnes of kynde.

The scribal capitalization of *Contricion* here dramatizes the breakdown: the character Contrition has abandoned the quality contrition on which his being depends, and allegory has turned its back on allegory, while the salve image receives its fullest definition in its very act of dying. Both Langland and St John come close to the fallacy of imitative form in their allegories of the coming of chaos.

The most extreme confusion of levels of reality in *Piers Plowman* occurs at the very beginning of Passus XX when the waking Will encounters the allegorical personification Need. This is the only example of such a mixing in the B-text, though there is another example in the "autobiographical" passage added by the C-poet before the confessions of the Seven Deadly Sins (C VI.1-104 in Skeat). Here the waking Will is accosted by Conscience and Reason, who have come out of his dream vision to visit him in Cornhill. Both of these passages effect an identification of the living poet with his allegorical poem, of the author with his work. I believe Chaucer makes the same kind of identification in the prologue to the Parson's Tale, where the hurried termination of the tale-telling seems to reflect Chaucer's sense of his own impending termination.[7] In the C-text of *Piers Plowman*, Will's response to the personifications Conscience and Reason serves as a wry apology and justification of the poet's own erratic way of life, considered (and criticized) within his poem. In the B-text passage, Need, whom the waking Will encounters, is, according to Adams' fascinating interpretation, the immediate precursor of Antichrist; as the Noonday Devil he comes just before Antichrist, and here he comes to offer a final temptation to the spirit of the narrator, who in his waking guise is virtually identified with Will Langland. This final temptation involves him in the apocalypse which he is describing - makes him part of his poem - and does so with an authority that it would not have had if it had been made within the dream. The decay of the narrator's body through the operation of Elde will be described within the dream; but Need's temptation of the poet's spirit has the authority that real life imparts.

In the Apocalypse, it is one of "the seven angels which had the seven vials full of the seven last plagues" who shows St John the heavenly Jerusalem (xxi.9 - xxii.5) and then gives him God's instructions, telling him that "the time is at hand" for "the sayings of the prophecy of this book" (xxii.10). It is characteristic of Langland that the authority vouchsafed his vision of

apocalypse comes not from an avenging angel but from the Noonday Devil. Yet the real authority of both writers arises from their extraordinary stylistic urgency that rushes us relentlessly toward the Last Day.

NOTES

1 Robert Adams, "The Nature of Need in 'Piers Plowman' XX", *Traditio* 34 (1978) pp.273-301.

2 See, e.g., Rosemary Woolf, "Some Non-Medieval Qualities of *Piers Plowman*", *Essays in Criticism* 12 (1962) p.115.

3 References to Langland are from *Piers Plowman: The B Version*, ed. George Kane and E.T. Donaldson (London, 1975).

4 See OED, *jug*, v.4

5 The *locus classicus* is probably John M. Manly's comment in *The Cambridge History of English Literature*, Vol. II (1908), p.27, about B XVIII in which Langland describes the crucifixion simultaneously in terms of the allegory of the Christ-Knight and in literal terms: "instead of the [expected] jousting, we have an account of the crucifixion".

6 *Canterbury Tales*, VI (C), 472-5.

7 See my discussion in *Chaucer's Poetry: An Anthology for the Modern Reader*, 2nd ed. (New York, 1975) pp.1112-14.

REFLECTIONS OF SOME MANUSCRIPTS OF NICHOLAS LOVE'S *MYRROUR OF THE BLESSED LYF OF JESU CHRIST*

By A.I. DOYLE

It will be thirty-five years ago that I first met Elizabeth Jones in the Anderson Room of Cambridge University Library over its Additional MS 6578 of Love's *Myrrour* which she was then studying for her London M.A. and which she hoped to re-edit eventually. Before she published her dissertation in a revised form in 1974[1] it had become obvious, because of the ever-growing number of known manuscripts, that complete collation of every one would be impracticable and unlikely to be profitable in proportion to the time it would take. Her actual examination of a considerable number of copies led her to think that, by good luck, Cambridge U.L. Add. 6578 and 6686 afforded the best available text, more faithful to the original than that printed previously by L.F. Powell.[2] Until someone else follows her steps and further pursues the detailed textual, linguistic and codicological relationships of the extant manuscripts and printed editions, it may be useful if I offer a few observations on the superficial evidence concerning the origins of certain copies, with corrections to what she and I have said about them, directed particularly to the circumstances of reproduction and dissemination of one of the leading works in Middle English.

As Elizabeth showed, there is no need to think that Nicholas Love was of northern birth, and people of his surname were associated with both the Coventry and London Charterhouses.[3] It is possible he was the Augustinian friar of the same names who, as lector, in 1389 was authorised to go to Rome, and the prior of that order at York with the same fore-name in 1400,[4] who could have transferred to the stricter rule of the Carthusians in time to become rector and then prior of Mountgrace in 1409-10. It may be that the *Myrrour* was completed before he took either office or entered the new foundation from another Charterhouse, and even that he had begun it before entering the order. The contacts implied by "at the instaunce and the prayer of somme devoute soules" are perhaps more than we might expect of a Carthusian. It would also seem from this phrase that it was not commissioned by someone notable like Archbishop Arundel, who would have been alluded to obliquely at least in the *Proheme*. The audience or readership is envisaged as primarily regular religious, yet not specifically Carthusians, and expressly also women, while the wider public of "lewed men and wommen and hem that ben of symple understonding" for English books is acknowledged.[5] The combating of Lollardy, especially in the Short Treatise and Devout Prayer at the end, has something of the

air of an afterthought about it, apt in the years culminating in Arundel's decrees of 1407-9, but there is no clear reference to his control of scriptural translations. The wording of the Latin *Memorandum* which occurs in many but by no means all of the copies of the *Myrrour* is at once more and less precise than has been appreciated.[6] It tells us only that it was *circa* 1410 that "originalis copia huius libri . . . *presentebatur*" to Arundel at London "ad inspiciendum et *debite* examinandum antequam *fuerat libere* communicata" (my italics). It is not merely couched retrospectively: the indefinite date shows it must have been written a good deal later when presumably the unrestricted circulation of the book had been challenged. It goes on to record not only the requisite approval but also a positive mandate for publication to edify the faithful and confute the Lollards. That Arundel was given fraternity of Mountgrace in 1409 may indicate when this event occurred.[7] Some years may therefore have elapsed before the *Memorandum* was thought desirable and much free communication of the *Myrrour*, so encouraged, could have happened in the meantime.

If this interpretation is correct the significance of Add.6578 is somewhat altered.[8] The *Memorandum* on f.2v is conspicuously an addition by a different (though similar and contemporary) hand to that of the chapter-list and *Attende* note (concerning the letters N and B in the textual marginalia for sources) which immediately precede it, without their coloured decoration, with a prefixed paraff sign (cc) by the same additional pen and ink superimposed on descenders of that decoration, and with a + sign in the adjacent margin. The hand of the *Memorandum* also occurs in the following body of the book, on ff.23v-4v where it supplies certain Latin marginalia which are not underlined in red as the others there and elsewhere are, and on the top outside corner of f.43r with the note "deficiunt Rubrice in [hoc?] quaterno", this being the first page of quire *f*, in which (ff.44-9) the English chapter rubrics are now written in the allotted spaces by another hand, differing from that of the main copyist of the text responsible for the rest of the rubrics, and in a different shade of red. It thus seems that the scribe of the *Memorandum* was engaged in completing the matter of the work after the ordinary functional decoration, which had been left partly unfinished. The second rubricator who supplied the deficiency so noted also inserted part-rubrics in the preliminary chapter-list.[9]

Below the *Memorandum* in much smaller writing, slightly different ink yet possibly the same hand and certainly contemporary, is "caue de istis verbis gude pro gode / Item hir pro heere in pluralitate", and this is echoed by similar small annotations to the text: on f.5r against "hir herte" there is "here" in the margin, on 7v "meyn" is glossed "mene" in the margin and "gude" in the text changed to "gode", on 31v "siȝht" rendered as "sight". The incidence of such spelling modifications, perhaps meant as examples since they are by no means exhaustive for the pages covered, is not maintained in the rest of the book, but there are many other neat corrections by what is probably the same hand, such as insertions of missing letters or words and marks where a paraff is omitted (e.g. ff.36r, 93v, 101v, 118v). This scrupulousness about minutiae

only supplements that of the original scribe,[10] for his freedom from substantial omission and error is implied in consequence. Any corrections before his completion of copying must have been made even more discreetly. Probably in the reviser's hand the word "hic" occurs repeatedly in the margins, not obviously related to particular corrections and so presumably recording progress, either in underlining (on f.22v in red) or correction or else of re-transcription (35v, 36v, 40v, 50v in black).

Not all of this revision need have been done within one short period but it looks uniform and it is reasonable to suppose that it envisaged this copy being employed, with some changes of spelling, as an exemplar for further copies, which were also to include the *Memorandum*. It is not impossible that Add.6578 was the original copy presented to and returned by Arundel *circa* 1410, or that the scribe of the *Memorandum* or reviser was the author himself, but if so it may have been after an interval during which this copy, in its original state, had already served for reading and copying. For it is not likely that once the *Memorandum* had been added to a manuscript it would be omitted in a derivative, and there are a considerable number of extant copies which seem to have never included it, some of very early date. Nicholas Love died in 1424, with which the writing of the *Memorandum* and revisions in Add.6578 is perfectly compatible. The writing of the main copyist is a very steady squat anglicana of comparable character yet with a couple of more modern forms (simple *a* and secretary final *s*) which might fit a younger man. He also wrote the chapter-list and *Attende* note on a preliminary bifolium (which may mean that it was somewhat of an after-thought) in the same greenish-yellow ink, and at the head of its last page (f.2v) the inscription "Iste liber est de domo Assumpcionis beate Marie in monte gracie" is in a hand of similar aspect, although with enhanced ascenders and descenders as well as a couple of more formal letter choices (two-compartment *a* and secretary *g*), and slightly different ink. That this inscription is close in date to the copying of the book can hardly be in doubt, and the formula of other known and certainly later Mountgrace ex-libris instances is different.[11] Its abnormal placing must be on account of the margins of the facing first page of the text having been filled with an illuminated vinet of which offset traces are visible on f.2v, the original f.3 having been removed at some time and replaced by a post-medieval supply of the missing matter.[12] From traces the vinet may have included the initials of Nicholas Love, as do two other early copies but there was not spare space for any sizeable picture. The remaining illumination of the major initials, at part beginnings, is of good quality, as is the penwork flourishing of subsidiary initials both in the text and the preliminary bifolium, and the membrane of the whole book. It was therefore more costly than the plainest fair copy that might be made in or for a Charterhouse, though the style of writing is more utilitarian than what is often found with similar decoration in vernacular books of this period, c.1410, probably produced in the metropolitan book-trade. It is not inconceivable that Add.6578 was written in the provinces and illuminated in the metropolis to make it more presentable, and that the Mountgrace ownership inscription

was added on its return to the author's house.

The style of writing of Add.6578 is in fact not unlike that of Cambrai Bibliothèque Municipale MS 255, a copy of the English translation of Suso's *Horologium Sapiencie* with the colophon "Scriptum finaliter in monte gracie die Mensis Maij Anno domini M.CCCC.° xix Deo gracias", which also occurs in Aberystwyth, National Library of Wales, Porkington MS 19, of the same work.[13] The force of "finaliter" is most apposite for the translator's work, and neither of the extant transcriptions need be his own fair copy. Elizabeth Salter argued that Nicholas Love adapted the Devout Prayer which appears at the end of most copies of the *Myrrour* from this translation of Suso's work;[14] if so, it must either have been known to him well before 1419 or only added to his text after that date, which seems to me too late. Add.6578 includes it in the main hand and ink, not as an obvious addendum. If the Suso was, as the colophon implies, being translated over a longish period at Mountgrace there is no difficulty; whether Love himself could have been the translator requires stylistic comparison and accommodation of the fact that the latter addresses his *Seven Poyntes of Trewe Wisdam* to a lady of eminence as her "chapeleyne" which in the literal sense was not possible for a Carthusian, though such a term could be used obsequiously, and we cannot be sure what might be permissible in literary and spiritual relations with a patroness, for instance.[15]

Linguistically neither Cambrai 255 nor Porkington 19 are northern: the latter is Essex, according to sampling by Professors McIntosh and Samuels; another copy of the *Seven Poyntes*, in a volume which belonged in the fifteenth century to Beauvale Charterhouse (Notts.), Douce 114, is in two hands of which the first, placed in Nottinghamshire by its spelling, is very like that of Cambrai, while the second belongs again to Essex.[16] It seems likely that the latter was the language of the source, overlain when the first copyist was influenced by accompanying texts and environment. What may be the same first hand is found in manuscripts with a variety of English dialects, south-eastern, north midland and northern, so, if it was one man's, he took what was in front of him and perhaps the preferences of his superiors at the time.[17] It is therefore of interest that the language of Add.6578 of the *Myrrour* is predominantly Essex too, with only certain North Midland features ("mykel", "gude", "luf", "awne") such as the reviser noted for modification by subsequent copyists. We must remember that the initial community of a Charterhouse was recruited from previous foundations, commonly at a distance, and the members were rarely just local in origin. Moreover, books might be made elsewhere or by the temporary transfer of a scribe.

Cambridge University Library Add.6686 is said by the Edinburgh Dialect Survey to repeat the same complexion as 6578 and Elizabeth Salter was persuaded that its text was derived directly therefrom. Superficially it is obvious that the wording and sequence of the preliminaries, chapter headings and endings all agree, and they both contain marginal notes found in few other copies.[18] 6686, of which only section I (pp.1-234) is in question, since the other sections were connected later,[19] is a larger and finer copy than 6578,

elaborately ruled in ink in two columns and written in a good bastard anglicana, carefully punctuated, with illumination of high quality showing stylistic developments of the second decade of the fifteenth century yet not in the main stream of metropolitan work. One vinet (p.190) includes three void shields, from which it may be inferred that the limner did not know the precise destination of the book save that it was for an armigerous person or body, or else he assumed from the expense it must be so. Its inclusions of the additions and corrections of 6578 and close correspondence of its language ("quite staggeringly so" in McIntosh's words), together with an ascription of the work to Nicholas Love as monk of Mountgrace not found in 6578 (although a later marginal note there about him may imply it),[20] incline me to think it a provincial product not much later, for someone in direct contact with the author or Mountgrace.

Although Arundel's approbation c.1410 was sought before the book was *freely* communicated, a restricted communication to devout souls such as those for whom it was written is not thereby excluded and may indeed be implied. Copies which seem never to have contained the *Memorandum* may be or descend from such a previous issue and may correspond to the state of the unrevised form in Add.6578 or even an earlier version. The Foyle manuscript (Beeleigh Abbey, Maldon, Essex) which has the ownership inscription of Sibil de Felton, abbess of Barking from 1394 to 1419, not only lacks the *Memorandum* but has the *Attende* note twice, abbreviated before the *Proheme* of the text and also in full at the end of the preceding chapter-list in another hand, suggestive of a subsequent supplementation from a different exemplar, and Elizabeth discovered that it includes an alternative Passion narrative (which survives in some later copies) which could represent the author's preparatory efforts.[21] Professor Samuels has diagnosed the spelling of the main scribe as S.W. Essex, and other, linguistically mixed, anglicana hands share the copying in a succession of manners more that of a communal than a commercial product of the best metropolitan type like another book of the abbess's, Bodley MS 923 of the *Clensyng of Mannes Sowle*; yet the illumination of the Foyle manuscript is of the same style (Margaret Rickert's I), i.e. c.1400-10 for the metropolis, from which Barking was hardly isolated.[22] Lavish illumination of the same style and period is also seen in Takamiya MS 8, written in a textura of a kind common in English scriptural manuscripts at this period when the Lollard versions must have been being constantly copied commercially in the area of the metropolis.[23] As it was given away by Joan Countess of Kent, widow of the founder of Mountgrace, before her death in 1442 it is possible that it was presented to her or made for her from an early exemplar at the author's initiative. The choice of a superior script (hierarchically) suggests a special respect for the text or recipient, or both. The absence of armorials in English manuscripts of this quality and period does not appear to be significant for the status of their owners. They may have been more often incorporated, or added, later in the fifteenth century, not always for people of the highest ranks. Bodleian MS e mus. 35, which does have the arms of Neville and Beaufort remaining from a fuller, damaged,

display with illumination of a rather more developed style (perhaps c.1415-30), may have belonged to Joan Countess of Westmorland or her brother Thomas Duke of Exeter, who died in 1440 and 1426 respectively. This copy, the first item in the volume, has a chapter-list and *Attende* but not the *Memorandum*. It is written in a fine anglicana formata or bastard of southern orthography, although subsequent hands for other items show some northern characteristics.[24]

It is obvious that most *Myrrour* copying, both before and after the *Memorandum* was added, must have been done far away from Mountgrace, and chiefly in the main centres of vernacular book-production by scribes and limners habituated to it. If provincial spellings crop up, they may be survivals from the exemplar or even the original but they may be, too, traces of a copyist's earlier training.[25] The copies with consistently pronounced dialect features, such as Bodley 131, written by John Morton probably at York in the second quarter of the century,[26] or Glasgow University Library Gen. 1130, including the arms of Willoughby of Eresby in mid-century illumination and of Nottinghamshire language[27] - both without the Latin preliminary notes and both, from their other contents, probably meant for religious readers - are clearly distinguishable from what appears to be the usual metropolitan model of the *Myrrour* - a model not wholly standardized however, nor normally cheap. Though the contents will commonly include the *Myrrour* itself with the Short Treatise and Devout Prayer appended, a list of 64 chapters, with part-divisions for the days of the week, preceding, the *Attende* note between chapter-list and *Proheme*, the *Memorandum* coming after it[28] there or separately at the end of the whole work, Latin side-notes of the initials N[icholas] and B[onaventura], other source-references and marginal commentary, nevertheless one or more of these elements may be missing (from the outset, not only by later loss) or displaced, sometimes possibly by choice or convenience (such as lack of space)[29] but probably often because of the content and order of the exemplar being copied. As we have seen, there may have been traditions of the text ante-dating the *Memorandum*, and perhaps the chapter-list, or *Attende* and corresponding side-notes, or the Devout Prayer, descending from different recensions of the author's work,[30] while the same effects could stem from decisions or failings of later copyists; and such defects observed could be made up from alternative exemplars. It is notable however that some distinct patterns are found repeatedly, and equally notable that when we find as we do, symptomatically of the commercial situation, particular scribes each making more than one copy of the work, those by one individual do not conform to a single pattern of those elements, or to the same textual wording, or to a standard lay-out and page dimensions.

Cambridge University Library Mm.V.15, where the chapter-list and *Attende* are on a separate preliminary bifolium (as in Add.6578) and from frame, membrane, writing and decoration a probable afterthought, is all in a slightly awkward anglicana formata at 32 lines per page, which Mr J.J. Griffiths has suggested is the same hand as that of Oo.VII.45(1) of the same library, a portion only of a much grander half-finished copy at 37 lines a page and with marginalia not in the corresponding passages of Mm. As the illumination of Mm

is in Rickert's style I, i.e. again of the first decade of the century, whereas that of Oo is in style II, i.e. c.1425-50, it is not surprising if they were not utilising the same exemplar and that they were done to different specifications.[31] Huntington Library HM 1339, however, which Mr Griffiths has also suggested (much more arguably) as by the same hand, has the same number of lines as Mm, both *Attende* and *Memorandum* at the end of a chapter-list integral to the volume, and is a distinctly cheaper product, on poorer membrane, less evenly written and with only blue and red decoration.[32]

Three copies in the hand of Stephen Dodesham (who ended his life as a Carthusian at Sheen in 1482 but who must have been very active as a scribe before as well as after entering religion, from the later 1420s onwards)[33] differ in several respects. Trinity College, Cambridge, B.15.16, a manuscript Elizabeth particularly admired, has 33-line pages, no *Attende*, yet the *Memorandum* at the very end; the illumination is of the second quarter of the century and, like the membrane and writing, of high quality. Bodleian Library Rawlinson A.387B is of poorer material, preparation, writing and decoration, probably later in the scribe's career, with 28-31 lines per page and both Latin notes after the chapter-list. Glasgow University Library, Hunterian T.3.15, with a contemporary ex-libris of Sheen and attribution to Dodesham dated 1474/5, has better membrane and illumination and, except for the chapter-list and following two Latin notes in long lines, is in two columns of 26-30, the writing closer in quality as well as style to Rawl. than to the neater Trinity. Amongst the marginalia of Hunterian are some found in Add.6578 and 6686 but not in Trinity B.15.16, evidence possibly of textual descent or conflation by Carthusian channels.

The two-column lay-out of Add.6686 and Hunterian T.3.15 is not unparalleled, in a few larger copies,[34] but long lines are normal, even in some big ones. Most commonly copies are of a middling size, on good membrane (only a minority involving paper), well-written (predominantly in anglicana formata), quite expensively decorated, and not containing any other work. As we increasingly recognize in them more hands of copyists and limners of other manuscripts we may be able to get nearer to discerning the relative roles of the executants and acquirers of such books and what intermediaries and processes lay between them, which, for want of really explicit evidence, is still so mysterious, both the process whereby a new work was "libere communicata" and that by which anyone might obtain a copy of something new to him, through what we call the book-trade. If any articles of Middle English literature established themselves early enough in the fifteenth century as so well-known and frequently in demand that it was worth a stationer's paying for costly copies in advance of actual purchasers, rather than waiting passively for orders, Nicholas Love's *Myrrour of the Lyfe of Christ* was surely one, especially if, after Arundel's mandates, it was thought of as replacing the Lollard Gospels. (The Brut chronicle is another.) It is not to denigrate the *Myrrour* to say that an illuminated copy could have served a comparable function with that of the first-communion or confirmation present of a more recent era, more devout than our own, in which the book-trade saw its opportunities. Books of hours of course already and increasingly

had that function, supplied to a large extent from overseas. The surviving copies of the *Myrrour* do not suggest that it was ever subjected to the same degree of standardisation until Caxton, De Wrode and Pynson began to print it, from 1486 onwards, repeatedly.[35] The early editions were of folio format, illustrated, even some copies on membrane, aiming at, one may guess, the top end of the market, but in the sixteenth century they were reduced to quarto (though retaining most of the pictures),[36] no doubt for a wider public. The woodcuts served some of the same functions as the illumination in the manuscripts: to sub-divide the text and to give a more than ordinary value to the book. A bequest by a London merchant, Thomas Pettit, in 1498 of his book of parchment written with gold letters called *Speculum Vite Christi*,[37] supports the latter hypothesis: they did not merely distinguish it visually from any other books he had, yet that would itself be quite possibly true. Except for a comparatively few and mostly early copies, the many more Brut chronicles which were produced at a lower level of craftmanship for similar owners by metropolitan scribes in the course of the fifteenth century afford a contrast, in almost everything but the high incidence of imperfection in the survivors, owing to wear and tear, which points to a high rate of total loss in each case. The use of membrane, treatment as heirlooms, and post-reformation Catholic piety may have mitigated the effects on copies of the *Myrrour*. The evidence of medieval ownership and influence is that the author's and archbishop's desires achieved a much wider success than the remaining copies show, and the latter that it was done predominantly through the book-trade.

NOTES

1 *Nicholas Love's "Myrrour of the Blessed Lyf of Jesu Christ"*, Analecta Cartusiana 10 (Salzburg, 1974).

2 *Ibid.* p.21.

3 *Ibid.* pp.23-4, and E. Zeeman, "Nicholas Love - a Fifteenth-Century Translator" *RES*, n.s. 6 (1955) pp.113-27.

4 F. Roth, *The English Austin Friars 1249-1538*, 2 vols. (Cassiciacum 6-7, New York, 1966, 1961) II, pp.243*, 265*.

5 Cf. J. Hogg, "Mount Grace Charterhouse and late medieval English spirituality", *Collectanea Cartusiensia* 3, Analecta Cartusiana 82:3 (Salzburg, 1980) pp.18-21.

6 Printed by Salter (1974), pp.1-2; Hogg, pp.19-20: "liber" in the former should be "libere" as in the latter.

7 Hogg, p.21, n.64.

8 Cf. Salter (1974), p.11.

9 The red paraffs and underlining were not provided on many pages intermittently throughout; running titles were done alternately by the main and another hand but with no obvious regularity. In both operations the unit seems to be a bifolium or page, not a quire. The supplier of the missing rubrics has a secretary hand of a type one might expect in the 1420s and may not have done his job at once.

10 Cf. E. Zeeman, "Punctuation in an early manuscript of Love's *Myrrour*", *RES*, n.s. 7 (1956) pp.11-18.

11 "Montis gracie liber", "Liber montis gracie", "Liber domus montis gracie".

12 In an imitation medieval hand which, from its hints of legal anglicana, may be sixteenth or seventeenth century.

13 Salter (1974), p.33, cites the year as 1319, following the *Catalogue Général des Manuscrits des Bibliothèques Publiques de France: Départements*, vol. 17 (1891) p.88, which omits one C.

14 E. Zeeman, "Two Middle English versions of a prayer to the Sacrament", *Archiv* 194 (1957) pp.113-21.

15 A Carthusian, Gerard Boot, no doubt from the Perth Charterhouse, robbed on his way back to Flanders in 1450, was said to be confessor to the Queen of Scotland (Mary of Gueldres): *Proceedings & Ordinances of the Privy Council*, ed. N.H. Nicolas, vol. 6 (1837) p.100. Prelates like Thomas Langley, Bishop of Durham, professed themselves to be the king's "simple chaplain", i.e. in effect "humble servant".

16 I am indebted to Professor McIntosh for reviewing the question on several occasions. The two stints of the first hand in Douce sandwich that of the second, which begins and ends within pages of the *Seven Poyntes* (ff.90r line 8-109r line 11), evidently in collaboration. Unfortunately no other

copies are known of the preceding translations of saints' lives for comparison of the language. Both portions of Douce 114 were ed. by C. Horstmann, *Anglia* 8 (1885) pp.102-96; 10 (1888) pp.323-89. The English "compiloure" of the lives (of which the Latin texts were in some contemporary Carthusian libraries) offers an "Apologetik" for his style, "as umwhile soþeren, oþerewhile norþen - but þe cause why, nediþ not to be tolde" and says that he did the work at the bidding of his prior, but addresses a potential audience or readership of men and women, including clerks.

17 St John's College, Cambridge, C.25 of *The Orcherd of Syon* (not before 1415) - see ed. P. Hodgson & C.M. Liegey, vol. 1 EETS 258 (1966), frontispiece - and Takamiya MS 16 (Phillipps 10634), *The Master of Game* (not before 1406), of which I have seen only one opening in reduced facsimile in sale catalogues, are palaeographically close if not identical, and so is a fragmented Latin and English volume acquired by an abbot of Rievaulx in the middle of the century, Corpus Christi College, Oxford 155 + B.L. Cotton Vitellius D.V + Vespasian D.XIII ff.181r-201v, with a variety of languages according to Professor McIntosh, including Yorks. and S.E. Lincs. Dominus Johannes Watton may have been the scribe of this. Groupings on grounds of such script-likeness of course require more discussion of the relative effects of schooling and individuality.

18 E.g. in chapter 9, and on f.51v of 6578 "Item de abstinentia" in the lower margin is also in the lower margin of 6686 p.97.

19 Not only are the ruling, writing and decoration etc. distinct but the number 20 (for 1520?) with a cryptic monogram (based on *h*) occurring only on the lower margins of the last section, Hilton's *Scale* Book I etc., implies separate ownership. This and the previous section, *The Pistyl of Love* (Contemplations of the Dread and Love of God, or *Fervor Amoris*), however, manifest spelling-systems which suggest that the volume was put together in the North or N. Midlands. On p.120 of the *Myrrour* an early sixteenth-century hand notes the mention of Hilton's work, which may imply cross-reference.

20 The ascription "Explicit Compendium Nicholai Love Montis Gracie Monachi" was added, and later erased, below the colophon on p.233, where it can be mostly made out under ultra-violet light. In 6578 on f.79v a fifteenth-century hand responsible for some other annotations has written adjacent to a mention of the Lollards "Nota bene prior lufe"; cf. the marginal reference to "prior Norton" in the Mountgrace manuscript of the Book of Margery Kempe, ed. S.B. Meech, EETS 212 (1940) p.xxxvi. On p.36 of 6686 "Dan Adam" is mentioned.

21 E. Salter, "The manuscripts of Nicholas Love's *Myrrour of the Blessed Lyf of Jesu Christ* and related texts", *Middle English Prose: Essays on Bibliographical Problems*, ed. A.S.G. Edwards and D. Pearsall (New York, 1981) pp.118, 126.

22 Cf. O. Pächt and J.J.G. Alexander, *Illuminated Manuscripts in the Bodleian Library, Oxford*, vol. 3 (Oxford, 1973), p.68, no.769; M. Rickert, in *The Text of the Canterbury Tales*, ed. J.M. Manly and E. Rickert, vol. I (Chicago, 1940) pp.565, 567-8.

23 Again I have seen only a sale-catalogue reduced facsimile of two pages.

24 Cf. Salter (1974), p.14 (not Beauchamp, a mistake of the *Summary Catalogue of Western Manuscripts*, nor quartered) and (1981), p.120; Pächt and Alexander, p.82, no.939. M and N in the lower corners of p.xvi might stand for Margaret Neville, Thomas's wife, who is said to have died before

him: G.E. Cokayne and V. Gibbs, *Complete Peerage*, vol. 5 (1926) pp.203-4.

25 Cf. Salter (1974), p.13 n.49.

26 *Summary Catalogue*, vol. 2 pt i (Oxford, 1922), pp.152-3, no.1999. Among notes at the end "to peter warke ld." confirms the various other indications, that being the local name for the Minster fabric.

27 N.R. Ker, *Medieval Manuscripts in British Libraries*, vol. 2 (Oxford, 1977), p.925, but the arms are rather those of Robert, lord Willoughby 1409-52, than his father, William, and their placing at the beginning of Adam the Carthusian's *Soliloquium* suggests a connection with Axholme or Beauvale Charterhouse. The repetition of the same pair of works in two other manuscripts - see Salter (1974), p.16 n.61 - points to a limited, perhaps local, descent.

28 Salter (1974), pp.1-2, prints them in reverse order.

29 Someone wishing to add the *Memorandum* to a copy of the work already written with insufficient space between the *Attende* and Proheme might naturally put it at the very end, and so thereafter.

30 The presence or absence of the concluding couplet "Jesu lorde thy blessid lyf/helpe and conforte our wrecchid lyf", *Index of M.E. Verse* no.1728, and *Supplement*, may be another piece of evidence.

31 Oo has gaps of 13-14 lines ruled but blank between chapters, scarcely suitable for illustrations and perhaps meant for additional meditative rubrics. Mm is much rewritten in its text in the same sort of anglicana as is Pennsylvania Univ. Lib. Eng. 3 of *A Myrour to Lewde Men and Wymmen*, ed. V. Nelson, Middle English Texts 14 (Heidelberg, 1981) and has, erased, on f.138 the same note "usque huc" as occurs in B.L. Harley 45 of that work (*ibid* p.51), indicative of systematic correction and possible transcription, by a small team of scribes specialising in Middle English books, perhaps.

32 Formerly Ingilby, Ripley Castle, Yorks.: *Historical Manuscripts Commission*, report VI, app. p. 353. Salter (1974), p.8 n.35, disposes of the alleged Mountgrace connection.

33 I first sketched his apparent *oeuvre* in the Lyell lectures at Oxford, accompanied by an exhibition, in 1967. M.B. Parkes, *English Cursive Book Hands* (Oxford, 1969) illustrates Hunterian MS.T.3.15 as pl.6 (ii); and in his revised ed. (London, 1979), p.25, lists some further attributions, of which B.L. Add. 10053 is mistaken. Others continue to come to light, and await an adequate commentary. He was professed at Witham by 1462 and later re-professed at Sheen.

34 Cf. Salter (1974), p.15 n.58.

35 E.G. Duff, *Fifteenth Century English Books* (Oxford, 1917), no.48-51; A.W. Pollard and G.R. Redgrave, *Short-Title Catalogue of English Books 1475-1640* (London, 1926), no.3259-67.

36 E. Hodnett, *English Woodcuts 1480-1535* (rev. ed., Oxford, 1973) pp.5, 141-50.

37 Michael L. Zell, "Fifteenth- and sixteenth-century wills as historical sources", *Archives* 14 (1979), pp.67-74. For other instances of ownership

besides those cited by Salter (1974), pp.17-18, see my *Survey of the Origins and Circulation of Theological Writings in English in the 14th, 15th and early 16th Centuries* (Cambridge Ph.D. 1953), vol.1, pp.150-8, to which additions can now of course be made; the preceding account of the manuscripts not only needs amplification but much correction in respect of dating and localisation: cf. Salter (1981), pp.123-6, for a more inclusive list of manuscripts, where however the dating still needs revision.

IRONY AND SYMPATHY IN *TROILUS AND CRISEYDE:* A RECONSIDERATION

By DAVID LAWTON

> "The lover who thinks *while I was so happy, thinking of my love's faithfulness, she was busy deceiving me*, is deceiving himself. If every state in which we live is absolute, that happiness was not contemporary to that betrayal. The discovery of that betrayal is merely one more state, incapable of modifying 'previous' states, though not incapable of modifying their recollection. Today's misadventure is no more real than yesterday's felicity."
>
> Jorge Luis Borges, "A New Refutation of Time".[1]

I

In her essay in memory of C.S. Lewis, Elizabeth Salter eloquently defended his reading of *Troilus and Criseyde* as "a great poem in praise of love".[2] Enlarging upon Lewis's sense of duality in the work, she argued that "its greatest problem" is the poet Chaucer who "assumes his right to take sudden decisions about the development of his work in mid-career" by deepening the portrayal of human love in Book III and thereby establishing what she saw as an irreconcilable tension with Book V's epilogue. The difficulties of the work spring from this "freedom of imaginative movement", Chaucer's desire to understand the "complex human condition" of love, "to admit its dignity as well as its vulnerability, and to give serious status to bodily as well as to spiritual compassion".[3] This is a comment to equal anything by Lewis, full of excitement and perceptive sympathy; and it is for these qualities that Elizabeth Salter defended Lewis's liberal reading against others less inspired and more severe. Even for those who feel as I do that there is no failure of artistic foresight in the radical contrast between Book III and the epilogue, her essay remains a fine corrective: it is one of the best statements of a "sympathetic" reading of *Troilus* against the "ironic" readings to which we have been increasingly subject. The nomenclature here is borrowed from John P. McCall, who in his review of *Troilus* criticism in 1968 distinguished sharply between a "sympathetic" reading, dualistic and in basic agreement with Lewis, and an "ironic" reading endorsed by McCall as paying, in his view, proper attention to "the various kinds of irony - comic, philosophic and dramatic".[4]

There seems room for arbitration here: I see no good reason why an "ironic" reading should be steadfastly unsympathetic (although most are), or why a "sympathetic" reading should not accommodate the ironies that can be shown to exist. Accordingly, in this essay I attempt some classification of the types of irony in *Troilus and Criseyde*, and I make a few suggestions about the interplay between irony and sympathy in our reading of the poem. I adopt the method and terms recommended by Wayne C. Booth in *A Rhetoric of Irony*.[5] Central to Booth's method is what he calls the reconstruction of irony, and this involves the distinction between stable irony, in which successful reconstruction - which will produce a correct "reading" - is possible, and unstable irony, in which it is not. In all irony, Booth argues, the reader is required to reject the literal meaning, or an unspoken proposition on which it depends, and must proceed to try alternatives. Then comes the crucial step: a decision must be made about the author's beliefs, the way in which alternatives to the rejected meaning conform or fail to conform to the intention of the work. Stable irony allows us to do this; unstable irony does not, and is a total concealment of the author's attitudes beyond the range of critical reconstruction. Cutting across these two kinds, there is also a distinction between overt ironies, which conspicuously assert an irony which the author wants to share, and covert ironies. Booth's achievement is to have provided something close to a "grammar" of irony by which it may be parsed successfully; and central to this is his methodological insistence that critics who claim to detect irony must be explicit and candid, in context, about what the irony is. They are obliged, that is, to state overtly, to "close-read", the proposition(s) on which they judge the irony to rest. Using this method as the basis of a brief study, I shall show that much "ironic" interpretation of *Troilus* emphasizes covert ironies at the expense of overt ones and, more important, claims as stable ironies what are in fact unstable ones; in short, that much of what McCall welcomed as "ironic" reading is critically spurious.

One premise must be stated clearly. I shall be arguing that the ironies of *Troilus* are not all of a kind and do not all point in the same direction, that it is accurate to speak of Chaucer's ironic technique rather than his ironic consciousness. It would be self-defeating to postulate an unreliable narrator-*persona*, and I should prefer to think of an ironic voice, or as Booth (p.176) proposes for Fielding, a reliable but ironic author.[6]

II

The major dramatic irony of *Troilus* rests in the reader's foreknowledge about the outcome both of the Trojan wars and the love of Troilus and Criseyde. The proem to Book I foreshadows Criseyde's dereliction (I 56) and places Troilus firmly in the Trojan context by referring to him as "the Kyng Priamus sone of Troye" (I 2),[7] while the narrative of Book I opens with a reminder of the war's cause (I 57-63) and a statement of Calchas' prophetic foresight and his desertion of Troy 64-84). The irony is

continually reinforced, mainly by further stable and overt ironies, such as those on the theme of Fortune's implacable malevolence against Troy, not least in Diomede's brutal speech to Criseyde in Book V (871-924) forecasting the fall of Troy. It is also reinforced by stable, covert ironies, such as the parallel between Troy and Thebes begun with Criseyde's reading-matter in Book II and culminating in Troilus' dream in Book V and his ironic rejection of its exposition by Cassandra (V 1457-1533). Several of these stable, covert ironies occur in Book IV, where the lovers exercise their free will in making a rational decision to accept Criseyde's departure - a decision, however, which is based on false premises. Criseyde believes that Calchas will consent to her return to Troy as soon as he finds out how well she is faring there (IV 1338-44) - in any case, there will soon be a peace treaty (1345-51); and, while Troilus warns against this, constructing a scenario in which Calchas will encourage Criseyde to marry a lusty Greek, his rejoinder is built on the fiction that Calchas would be wrong to argue that "this citee nis but lorn" (IV 1479). In Criseyde's case, the covert irony is pointed by an overt authorial comment: she "spak right as she mente" (IV 1418). In the circumstances, two hundred lines after her deathly swoon, this can hardly mean that Criseyde did *not* mean what she said, that she was not "in purpos evere to be trewe" (1420) when she left Troilus. It is ironic only because it participates in the general dramatic irony, which negates the efficacy of Criseyde's feelings.

The stable dramatic irony is always present, but in the earlier parts of the poem, when the wheel is ostensibly turning in Troilus' favour, it more often takes covert forms. So Criseyde is influenced in her decision to accept Troilus by the song in praise of love sung by her niece Antigone. This is usually called "Antigone's song"; but when Criseyde asks Antigone who wrote it, Antigone replies:

> Madame, iwys, the goodlieste mayde
> Of gret estat in al the town of Troye . . .
> (II 880-1)

I presume that this must refer to Helen, the major cause of the Trojan war. This irony is consistent with that which has Pandarus, on the morning that he first takes Troilus' suit to Criseyde, being woken by "the swalowe Proigne" (II 64) - and her sedative song of a revenge for rape.

So rich is this vein of stable irony that it is hard to know where to stop. In Book II, for example, Pandarus is given the somewhat unusual device of an extended analogy, rather in the style of an epic simile, to inspirit Troilus with the hope that Criseyde will incline towards him. The fall of an oak proves that hard work in "a grete empryse" (II 1391) can lead to great joy:

> Thenk here ayeins: whan that the sturdy ook,
> On which men hakketh ofte for the nones,
> Receyved hath the happy fallyng strook,
> The grete sweigh doth it come al at ones,

As don thise rokkes or thise milnestones;
For swifter cours comth thyng that is of wighte,
Whan it descendeth, than don thynges lighte.

But reed that boweth down for every blast,
Ful lightly, cesse wynd, it wol aryse;
But so nyl nat an ook, whan it is cast . . .
(II 1380-9)

Yet, if I am right, the image is full of foreboding. It is not to be found in *Il Filostrato*, and Root takes it to be an amplification of a proverb, suitably enough for Pandarus. Lines 1387-9 follow a proverb very closely: "Oaks may fall when reeds stand the storm". But the proverb Root suggests, "A great tree hath a great fall", or others like "The tree (oak) is feeble that falls at the first dent", imply little of the detail of lines 1380-6.[8] It is possible, I think, to identify a further source for the image. There may well be an allusion here to the famous passage from Book *II* of Virgil's *Æneid* describing the fall of the citadel of Troy:

Tum vero omne mihi visum considere in ignis
Ilium et ex imo verti Neptunia Troia;
ac veluti summis antiquam in montibus ornum
cum ferro accisam crebrisque bipennibus instant
eruere agricolae certatim; illa usque minatur
et tremefacta comam concusso vertice nutat,
vulneribus donec paulatim evicta supremum
congemuit traxitque iugis avulsa ruinam.[9]

Much of the detail tallies. Chaucer's adjective "stordy" suggests the size and age of the tree, like Virgil's *antiquam*, and although Pandarus does not mention mountains, the comparison with an avalanche ("thise rokkes") and other elements ("the grete sweigh", "descendeth") suggest a long and accelerating fall. "The grete sweigh" (1383) would in fact be a remarkably apt rendering of Virgil's *congemuit* (*OED* "sweight": "the sound of a falling body"). It is plausible that Chaucer is alluding to Virgil here. The reconstruction of so learned an irony (at Pandarus' expense) would simply restate the dramatic irony: it associates the outcome of Troilus' love for Criseyde with the conquest of Troy by the Greeks.

It would be easy to overstate the critical implications of such dramatic irony. There is nothing here to show a predestinarian attitude or argue that the lovers are entirely Fortune's slaves. It is a matter of tragic atmosphere, not of philosophy. It is right to insist forcibly that Troilus and Criseyde can and do make important choices at every stage of the narrative. Neither, however, in the face of irony so consistent, can one assert that they are entirely free to do whatever they choose. At the same time, there are stable and overt ironies which stress that the fall of Troy is itself a result of choice. The most important of these is the narrator's comment on the decision of the Trojan parliament to exchange Criseyde for Antenor, a passage which reminds us just how overt Chaucer's overt irony is:

O Juvenal, lord! soth is thy sentence,
That litel wyten folk what is to yerne,
That they ne fynde in hire desir offence;
For cloude of errour lat hem nat discerne
What best is; and, lo, here ensaumple as yerne.
This folk desiren now deliveraunce
Of Antenor, that broughte hem to meschaunce.

For he was after traitour to the town
Of Troye; allas, they quytte hym out to rathe!
O nyce world, lo thy discrecioun!
Criseyde, which that nevere dide hem scathe,
Shal now no lenger in hire blisse bathe;
But Antenor, he shal com hom to towne,
And she shal out; thus seyde here and howne.
(IV 197-210)

The rhetorical technique, with its self-conscious *exclamatio* and sententious pointing of an exemplary moral, leaves nothing of the reader's response to chance - except perhaps a renewed appreciation of the dramatic irony, that the parliament helps to make two traitors in place of one. But there is another important element in this passage, the rather unBoethian extension of the word "world" to include the decisions of human beings: "O nyce world, lo thy discrecioun!" The Trojan "folk" exercise their free will and in so doing place a further constraint on the lovers' freedom of choice. One can hardly argue that ironies implying fatality and ironies implying choice may cancel each other out; the conclusion must be that the poem is an analysis of choice, of limits (including others' choices) set on the freedom of the will, and that the poem poses questions precisely about the *degree* of freedom. Only Pandarus here believes in unlimited free will and it leads him, as it has led some critics, to hate Criseyde (V 1732).

The issue is not whether Troilus and Criseyde are free to choose, but whether anything that they could choose might conceivably protect their love and so guarantee their freedom. And the dramatic irony still stands: present choices once made become historical necessities. As readers we have the mimetic experience of divine foreknowledge, and this is the mainspring of the dramatic irony. But it is also true that, through the author's posture as a concerned historian and through the ironies of choice, we also undergo an equivalent of Troilus' (and Chaucer's?) experience, of wishing that things did not have to be as they are. It is the tension between these two sorts of irony, ironies of fatal necessity and ironies of fateful will, that creates the balance between involvement and detachment, between appreciation of the lovers' nobility and wise pessimism about their frailty - the "sort of paradoxical sympathy" that G.G. Sedgewick saw as the pleasure of "general dramatic irony": "for, though it is sympathy, it is likewise detached . . . The whole attitude of the interested spectator is ironic".[10]

The interplay which is the substance of these ironies, between necessity and will, assists us in certain discriminations on the

surface of the narrative. It is true, as Robert apRoberts argues, that Chaucer goes to some lengths to make Criseyde's departure from Troy appear unavoidable, the equivalent of Boethian "conditional necessity". ApRoberts then suggests, however, that Chaucer intends this impression to mitigate Criseyde's fall to Diomede. I fail to see how this view can be upheld: the ironies of Book V work solidly against it, and they are supported by some explicit, non-ironic condemnation. In this part of the poem there are small-scale covert ironies, such as Criseyde's writing her wretched answer to Troilus' last letter "for routhe - / I take it so" (V 1587-8). But the reconstruction of this requires great care. Does Chaucer mean that Criseyde is not sorry? He cannot mean this: Book V is full of Criseyde's guilt and remorse. The contrast must be between her sympathy and its inadequate manifestation in the letter (which Shakespeare's Diomed would have called paltering), or it must lie in the singularly comfortless way Criseyde demonstrates her *routhe* to Troilus in Book V compared with Books II and III (and with the *routhe* she takes on Diomede).

Such ironies, however, and the same phrase "for routhe", make a fine test-case for knowing when to stop. Criseyde is to blame, and Chaucer says so:

> And if I myghte excuse hire any wise,
> For she so sory was for hire untrouthe,
> Iwis, I wolde excuse hire yit for routhe.
> (V 1097-9)

It spoils a delicate judgement to find irony here. What could the irony conceivably be? The poet says three things: that he would like to excuse Criseyde, but can't - he admits the "untrouthe"; that Criseyde was sorry; and that he is still prepared ("for routhe") to pity her. To undermine one of these three elements would also be to cast doubt on the others. And which one would it be: the poet does not feel compassion; Criseyde was not sorry; perhaps, even, there has been no "untrouthe"? The result is total interpretative collapse, an infinitely unstable irony. And why postulate an irony of this kind when there is no irony signalled (for the statement is not evidently incongruous)? Criseyde is to blame: that is not to say that one must regard her as evil or bad, or expect Chaucer to sound like Boccaccio at the end of *Il Filostrato*, or assume, as Donaldson seems to do, that to assign blame is a central purpose of the poem. This is more like Henryson's attitude to Cresseid than Chaucer's to Criseyde, and in Henryson, significantly, the dimension of the Trojan wars has been almost entirely lost: Henryson's Greek camp is a well planned assemblage of handsome town-houses. Criseyde does not become an abstract principle in Book V, nor is she without sorrows, some of her own making; but we are asked to view Book V from Troilus' standpoint, and for him she is like a hostile Fortune, her desertion the spiritual equivalent of the Greeks' destruction of Troy. Criseyde's character is not of paramount importance, unless we are prepared to argue that with another woman Troilus could have achieved an infinity of earthly happiness. Criseyde's character is a part, perhaps a product, of the *amplificatio* of the poem; it is itself a demonstration of the major thematic ironies. The frequent

local ironies at the characters' expense are rhetorical, not psychological.

I have detected two central themes behind the stable ironies of *Troilus*, and I have noted some of the most important examples of covert irony. Most of the stable irony in the poem, however, is overt, and the longer examples closely follow the pattern of IV 197-210 (above, p. 98). For example, stanzas 31 to 34 of Book I (211-38), enlarging upon Troilus suddenly falling in love, begin with an *exclamatio* against the world and will,

> O blynde world, o blynde entencioun! (211)

comment extensively on the obvious irony in Troilus' precipitate loss of his previous contempt for love, and offer Troilus as an example to "Ye wise, proude and worthi folkes alle" (233) of the *sententia* that "may no man fordo the lawe of kynde" (238). Since this is an overt irony, there is little point in treating it as a covert one. It is only reinforced by the local unstable irony (an analogy not a simile) comparing Troilus to "proude Bayard" (218). Nor should one feel, in hope of finding more in these stanzas than meets the eye, that Chaucer protests too much: the style of *Troilus* is based on amplification. It is an art of large ironic surfaces as much as strait depths. These four overt stanzas tell us what they tell us, and reinforce our sense of ironic superiority to Troilus. D.W. Robertson's treatment of this passage is in fact inspired by a category mistake: this is not covert irony and cannot be reconstructed to make the serious moral point that Troilus is denying his spiritual humanity and sinking into animal lust.

This passage demonstrates that much of the local overt irony of the poem is unstable; it reinforces the reader's superiority but it cannot be reconstructed. There is another obtrusive example on the verge of the central love-scene, as Troilus embraces Criseyde:

> What myghte or may the sely larke seye,
> Whan that the sperhauk hath it in his foot?
> (III 1191-2)

This is a predatory image: are we then justified in extracting, say, a feminist moral? Certainly not: almost immediately Troilus says to Criseyde "Now be ye kaught" (III 1207), and Criseyde's reply firmly states that her capture is the result of her own free choice (III 1210-11). Can the analogy with hawk and lark be taken as an indication, again, of animal lust? It surely cannot: what stated grounds for connection are there between birds killing and and humans making love? This has to be an unstable irony, and it is very common in Chaucer's poetry: a use of metaphors (rarely), similes or analogies that are almost conceitful in their contextual incongruity. They present the main evidence for declining to follow Elizabeth Salter in speaking of Chaucer's "sudden decisions about the development of his work in mid-career", for by their means Chaucer appears to foreshadow later (and, by inference, planned) changes of tone. The technique deserves to be called Ovidian, and it underlies Dryden's comparison between Chaucer and Ovid in terms

of wit and "turn of words".[11] It is one of the keys to Chaucer's and Ovid's mastery of *epanorthosis*, the skill of frequent, sudden and effortless shifts of tone, and in both authors it produces a partly mannerist art where the mannerism does not necessarily detract from the reader's sympathy. It certainly does not detract from the "paradoxical sympathy" of Sedgewick's spectator. It merely treats us as the spectators we are and does not seek "a willing suspension of disbelief". It is a tonal instability by which time is refuted: the poem's tone creates the one sort of time in which today's felicity and tomorrow's misadventure - as well as another age's retrospect - can, after all, be contemporary.

At this stage of my essay, as I thought originally, it seemed appropriate to give some examples of ironic misreading or over-reading by other critics. Yet I have found surprisingly few worth-while examples of sustained close reading to justify this exercise. There is, of course, on the ironic side, the notorious reading of Troilus' address to Criseyde's empty house, "O thow lanterne of which queynt is the light" (V 543); but the case for a pun on "queynt" here manages to be both grammatically feeble-minded and logically inept (for if Troilus is to be convicted of idolatry, he must see more light in Criseyde than a "queynt").[12] This does not command attention, let alone assent. On the sympathetic side (more or less; more to Troilus, less to Criseyde), Donaldson has offered a witty study of his narrator's portraits of Criseyde - in Book I, for example:

> So angelik was hir natif beautee,
> That lik a thing immortal seemed she,
> As dooth an hevenissh parfit creature
> That down were sent in scorning of nature
>
> (I 102-5)

Here is Donaldson's paraphrase, in terms of "what the narrator has succeeded in saying": "in his opinion, there was none so fair in the whole city of Troy (and one wonders how he got to Troy that was sacked several thousand years ago), because her natural beauty surpassed everyone's, being so angelic (or angel-like), that she seemed like an immortal thing (i.e. an angel), as does a heavenish perfect creature (i.e. an angel), of the kind that might be sent down in scorn of Nature (i.e. her natural beauty was so great that it was supernatural)" (*Speaking of Chaucer* p.54). The ironies (*lik, as, seemed*) enable us to see through the narrator and to distrust descriptions in terms of appearance, seeming, *manere*, other people's opinion and so on. Let us assume that this is irony and reconstruct it: "Criseyde, though beautiful, was still a human being". And even the milder reconstruction places exactly the wrong emphasis on Criseyde's beauty, since the lines exist to tell us quite how beautiful a human being Criseyde was. Then why should we assume irony? More to the point, how can we assume irony when we find Troilus described in an exactly comparable manner?

> And in the town his manere tho forth ay
> So goodly was, and gat hym so in grace,
> That ech hym loved that loked on his face.
>
> (I 1076-8)

So lik a man of armes, and a knyght,
He was to seen, fulfild of heigh prowesse;
For bothe he hadde a body and a myght
To don that thing, as wel as hardynesse;
And ek to seen hym in his gere hym dresse,
So fressh, so yong, so worthy semed he,
It was an heven upon hym for to see.

(II 631-7)

In the second stanza Criseyde is the witness, and the lines undoubtedly prepare us for her response to Troilus: "who yaf me drynke?" (II 651). But the style is much the same. "So lik a man of armes"; "so worthy semed he": these lines cannot possibly be reconstructed to mean that Troilus was an unworthy sluggard in the field.

Although I cannot agree with Donaldson, his mode of criticism is essentially fair practice: that is, it gives a complete reading of how what Donaldson takes to be the meaning of the passage is attained. By contrast, it must be said that ironic readings of the poem are frequently unfair. An extreme recent example is an essay by Alan Gaylord on "The Lesson of the *Troilus*".[13] The first part of the essay consists of an attack on sympathetic readers such as Donaldson, David and, particularly Salter, who, Gaylord charges, revise the lesson of the poem "to accord with modernist predilections" for such suspect notions as duality and complexity. It is as if in the good old days passionate love was a laughably simple phenomenon, like bubonic plague. Gaylord places himself in an embarrassing critical position: he disdains complexity while embracing irony; and only adept reasoning and close explication could rescue him. In fact, the one exemplary passage of close reading, of Troilus' extended soliloquy on free will in Book IV (958-1078), is vague, concluding that "Troilus has been wading in water that is too deep for him" (p.35), on the strange ground that the passage is ill-written; and, for the rest, historical speculation about what Gower and Strode might have thought does little to bolster Gaylord's credentials as authentic keeper of the medieval tablets. (Nor, for that matter, would any amount of extraneous reference to other medieval sources resolve the tone of Chaucer's poem).[14] This is a response to Gaylord's stance as critic in his rather patronising censure of what are, after all, the considered judgments of distinguished medievalists, not the jejune maunderings of naive modernists. I have highlighted it not in order to be gratuitously rude but because its tone is unhappily typical of much ironic reading. Such huffing is unnecessary, and obscures the considerable strength of much ironic reading (especially, of course, Robertson's). There is another reason for dwelling on Gaylord's approach. The case to be made about Troilus' predestinarian soliloquy is good and plausible: interestingly, Gaylord does not make it, for his close reading ends the moment he invokes Boethius. This under-lines the premise on which ironic reading is based. Rather, therefore, than expend more words on further close reading, on which ironic interpretation does not depend, it seems better to confront the question: how Boethian is *Troilus and Criseyde*?

For some critics, it is really the poem's machinery that is Boethian - the authoritative analysis of mutability, the workings of fortune in a sublunar world as a necessary aspect of what eternally is Divine Providence, give a destinal framework for the poem which makes it possible that Troilus' destiny is to love, and lose, Criseyde. This is not to say that Chaucer is wholeheartedly Boethian. For Alfred David, in Book III "Boethius, like the melancholy Jacques, is made part of the comedy to gladden our hearts";[15] more sombrely, T.A. Stroud writes that Chaucer "does not even seem to share Boethius' belief that man can grasp the principle reconciling foreordination and free will. All men are dwelling in a besieged Troy."[16] For others, what is Boethian is the poem's temper and final meaning. It is not only that Troilus hopes for happiness from what is mortal, flawed and inevitably transient, and must die before he can escape the torment of Fortune and recognise how fragile human happiness is. It is also that human love and sexual passion is to be viewed, by the student of Philosophy, austerely, even coldly, with moral distrust and in the spirit of *contemptus mundi*. Boethius may exalt the cosmic power of love, but he denies it sexual human expression.

There is no conceivable objection to saying that *Troilus* is a Boethian poem in its philosophical machinery, its language for change. The kind of love experienced by Troilus is tragic and noble, trapped within cycles of time with their ambiguous promise of a change and a renewal that may be more biological than spiritual, and it is also - in an absolute perspective - foolish, since it desires a stasis that is possible only in death. The extremes of human love generate the tension between mortal flesh and immortal spirit which temporal existence, their temporary union, may have concealed but cannot, without grace, remove. I take this to be the essence of a "sympathetic" reading of the poem. An "ironic" reading inspired by Lady Philosophy's answers would reject these as real problems, even though the questions are posed in the poem and the answers, as Elizabeth Salter saw, are not overtly provided.

The Boethian machinery serves to universalize the story; but the poem is not entirely Boethian in philosophical temper. In the epilogue, Chaucer is ready to imply that his book is worthy to

> . . . Kis the steppes wher as thou seest pace
> Virgile, Ovide, Omer, Lucan and Stace
>
> (V 1791-2)

but he is also wholly ready to concede that it may require moral and philosophical correction from those medieval writers, Gower and Strode. It is *Boece*, after all, that is a book of "moralitee", while *Troilus* belongs with "enditynges of worldly vanitees".[17] For Boethius denies the value of human sexual love. It is not a Boethian decision even to begin a poem of 8000 lines about a love-affair, still less to allow his hero such evident delight in false felicity:

> Hire armes smale, hire streyghte bak and softe,
> Hire sydes longe, flesshly, smothe, and white

> He gan to stroke, and good thrift bad ful ofte
> Hire snowissh throte, hire brestes rounde and lite;
> Thus in this hevene he gan hym to delite,
> And therwithal a thousand tyme hire kiste,
> That what to don for joie unnethe he wiste.
> (III 1247-53)

There is no accounting in Boethian terms for the sheer specificity of this sequence, for its audacious association of carnal and spiritual delight, or for the mutual trust and understanding that has already been developed between Troilus and Criseyde (III 464-7). As a presentation of a Boethian moral it is about as convincing as would be a condemnation of pornography in a series of slide-lectures. Yet it is true that sympathetic readings have tended to underplay the poem's Boethian elements, and the justice of much ironic reading should be granted. What must not be granted, however, is that the *Consolation* can be used as a straightforward gloss on *Troilus*. To deprive a Boethian interpretation of inevitable force, and many claimed ironies, it is enough to admit that Chaucer's relation with Boethius in *Troilus* is dialectic, rather like his relation with Macrobius in the *Parliament of Fowls*. If I find most sympathetic readings preferable to most ironic ones, it is because they permit more careful distinction between a poem and a crib.

But the preference cannot be absolute. Chaucer's dialogue with Boethius opens up an endless range of interpretations and the result, for altogether honourable reasons, is an endless argument: as in Biblical criticism, every verse has its counter. This is an area where neither Chaucer nor ourselves can be granted full Boethian freedom of choice. At the start of this essay I proposed to arbitrate between irony and sympathy, and I can best do so by suggesting that both types of reading respond, albeit one-sidedly, to definite and disparate elements present in the poem throughout its thematic and stylistic levels. It seems to me that ironic reading, despite the literal-minded religiosity of its conclusions, really brings into prominence the ludic aspects of *Troilus*; and that the various sympathetic readings engage, not without wishful thinking, with its religious anxieties. In Dante's *Comedy*, Dante the dreamer, who believes that he is led by love of an earthly woman, swoons out of his pity for Paolo and Francesca, placed in the Inferno by Dante the poet, who knows that Beatrice is the Beatific vision: how, this poem asks, can "Amor, ch'a nullo amato amar perdona", love which "condusse noi ad una morte" ever become or lead into "l'amor che move il sole e l'altre stelle"?[18] This is what I have called, inadequately, religious anxiety: it is the source of Dante's supreme scene of pathos, and it is the mainspring of Chaucer's concerns in *Troilus*. On the ludic plane, I must abbreviate here an argument that deserves more extensive airing. Writing on Andreas Capellanus, in *Preface to Chaucer*, D.W. Robertson has done much to reinstate the wit of his treatise, which consists in self-contradiction, paradox, a zany mixture of right and wrong, sophistry and casuistry of argument; yet Robertson's conclusion, that Andreas is writing a satire, very nearly a tract, on foolish love, is at odds with the great good humour of his analysis. Robertson is quite correct to stress the Christian tensions inherent in a twelfth

century version of an *ars amatoria*. My point is simply that Andreas (like Chrétien, Jean de Meun and indeed Gower in the frame of the *Confessio Amantis*) delights in generating these tensions - and then sidestepping them. We should take a dim view of efforts to depict Ovid's personal opinion of love from the *Ars* and the *Remedia*, given the witty circularity of the entire rhetorical performance. Yet this is how we are prone to examine Andreas. We assume that clerkly casuistry has a meaning extrapolable from the performance; and I do not believe that this is so. The skill of Andreas, and Chrétien, is in unstable irony, in raising a number of complex moral issues in order to make them vanish. It is a self-conscious feat of Literary prestidigitation; it is play. Rhetoric disguises and displaces meaning. But love is never more than the game that presents it, and lovers, as well as being players, are the played upon.

I would argue that *Troilus* contains a unique interweaving of these two major ideas of love, a religious view, troubled in its hope of reconciling sacred and profane love, and the ludic, in which the game of love, amoral and ironically perceived by a detailed observer, is less than flattering to its players. Both are present throughout *Troilus*, and the proper response to the poem, accepting their interplay of irony and sympathy, is - like the poem itself - oxymoronic. The religious aspect comprises the hazards of love. It offers great heights, a love that is mutuality and spiritual communion, an image reflected both in Troilus' first oxymoron "For ay thurste I, the more that ich it drinke" (I 406) and Criseyde's figurative "Who yaf me drinke?" (II 651). Such mutuality at its best may seem to be wordless (III 463-9); yet the language of love as a game, though it may offer consummation, renewal and even self-improvement, accepts the normal constraints on human communication. We may believe that we know what our lover thinks moment by moment; in fact, this is a tragic misconception. As Troilus puts it in Book I:

> O verray fooles, nyce and blynde be ye!
> Ther nys nat oon kan war by other be.
>
> (I 202-3)

What view of love does Chaucer invite his readers to take? The Prologue to Book I, adopting the stance of love-elegist who weeps and writes, invokes the fury Tisiphone (I 6-7), suggesting both the kind and degree of love's agony (Pandarus speaks of a woe as sharp as that of Titius in hell, his stomach rent by vultures: I 785 ff) and love's ultimate futility, recalling the infernal fury that despatches Arcite in the *Knight's Tale*. But the contrast developed from Boccaccio in this prologue is between hell and heaven: joyous lovers are invited to remember their own "passed hevynesse" (I 24) and to feel pity for star-crossed lovers

> And preieth for hem that ben in the cas
> Of Troilus, as ye may after here,
> That Love hem brynge in hevene to solas
>
> (I 29-31)

The ambiguity is established in line 31, and nothing preceding helps

clarify it: is the "hevene" in which "solas" can be found transcendent or immanent, religious or ludic? The following stanza, anticipating the poem's ending, moves unequivocally, and unexpectedly, in the religious direction

> And biddeth ek for hem that ben despeired
> In love that nevere nyl recovered be,
> And ek for hem that falsly ben apeired
> Thorough wikked tonges, be it he or she;
> Thus biddeth God, for his benignite,
> So graunte hem soone owt of this world to pace,
> That ben despeired out of Loves grace.
>
> (I 36-42)

Not only is there the ambiguous foreshadowing of Criseyde's disgrace (I 39); there is, more significantly, the implication that death is the only solace for the disappointed and perhaps (I 42) spiritually troubled lover. In this context, the link between Troilus' love and Troy's welfare already having been articulated, the Prologue postulates love as suffering to which we, as modern Hectors, are to react with compassion.

Love is therefore presented at times as an illness, a threat to life: what is thirsting more the more one drinks but a spiritual diabetes? Almost as often as Troilus pledges his commitment to Criseyde does he mention his death (I 427, 1057). Pandarus is to threaten Criseyde with the prospect of causing Troilus' death, and his own suicide, by the withholding of her compassion. This may be hyperbole, but it has been endorsed by the narrator: "Lo, here his lyf, and from the deth his cure" (I 469). Troilus believes that his destiny is to love (I 520), and this is the cause of his woe: and the belief early on induces a death-wish that is ironically prophetic (I 526-7). His appeal to Criseyde to save him from death (I 536-7) drinks from the same ironic cup. Evidently, this sort of love is also a threat to the soul, as is underlined by comic blasphemy, like Pandarus' prayer to "Inmortal god . . . that mayst nought dyen, I Cupide I mene" (III 185-6), or the cunning authorial comment "Blyssyd be Love that kan thus folke converte" (I 308), which exemplifies a type of wordplay that hints at connections between the earthly and the heavenly:

> Alle other dredes were from hym fledde,
> Bothe of th'assege and his salvacioun
>
> (I 463-4)

This also involves downright sleight of hand: the notion is implanted that Troilus' love represents a *loss* of virtue (I 438), only to be countermanded by the comment that his love is good for Troy (I 470-83), and leads to an *access* of virtue (I 1079-85). Love is at once torturer and comforter, betrayer and reformer. Like an illness, it is not a matter of choice. Troilus did not wish to love; nor did Criseyde: "This false world, allas, who may it love?" (II 420). But they have no choice, or rather - in a polite society - they cannot refuse; and so, as creatures, they resemble their creator: "God loveth, and to love wol nat werne" (III 12).

But love is also presented as a game, for the "Lawe of Kynde" is comic by virtue of its compulsion. Hence the animal imagery. A horse must do what a horse must do; Troilus is like proud Bayard (an image echoed by Pandarus in I 953); he is like a limed bird (I 353); he is caught in a snare (I 507), the old Ovidian connection of *amor* and *amus*; just as, physically, he is caught in a cupboard (III 601). This is the clerkly code: "He was tho glad his hornes in to shrinke" (I 300). It is a ludic conception of love that is the only one Pandarus understands: "Sometime a man moot telle his owene paine" (II 1501), sometimes a friend must blackmail his niece, sometimes a woman must write her first letter, and sometimes a dinner party and a feigned illness are just what a wise "purveyance", *sub specie ludi*, would decree. As long as their love remains on this level, Pandarus has a total control that extends to supplying everything from cushions to, apparently, rain: "But God and Pandare wiste al what this mente" (II 1561). The idealistic Troilus presents some problems to the arch-manipulator (see, for example, III 1188-90). For Troilus' game behaviour tends to become both exaggerated and sincere, like undisciplined method acting. We even see him working hard to remember his lines: "Mafay," thoughte he, "thus wol I sey, and thus" (III 52). And it is on this level (how will it affect her delicate social position, what will people say?) that Criseyde first worries about Troilus' proxy overtures. Criseyde has more than her share of what accompanies the ludic clerkly view, a Christian pessimism (related to cynicism) about the love game: "Full sharp bigynning breketh ofte at ende" (II 791); "That erst was nothing into nought it turneth" (II 798). The attitude is expressed in a symbolic and ambiguous exchange between Criseyde and Antigone in Book II. Antigone complains of men and their thoughtless games: "They weenen al be love if oon be hoot" (II 892). Criseyde appears indifferent, and, as it were, metaphysically preoccupied: "Ywis, it wil be night as faste" (II 898). Yet when that night falls, it is she who breaks through the structures of game with an altogether new tone of unforced spontaneity:

> Ne hadde I er now, my swete herte deere,
> Ben yold, ywis, I were now nought heere!
>
> (III 1210-11)

After this there can be no more game. The night of marvellous joy passes, and in the morning it is Criseyde who shatters the genre, the literary play of the *aube*, with a resonant prophecy, dramatically ironic, of "desseveraunce" (III 1424).

The ludic language has a definite function, firstly in implying that, like all games, the love between Troilus and Criseyde will end, and secondly, in providing the broadest possible gloss on the futility of that love which, like Troy, is doomed. After his first sight of Criseyde, Troilus is actually seen deciding to play the game, "loves craft to suwe", as, like Gower's dreamer at the end of the *Confessio*, he makes a mirror of his mind:

> Thus gan he make a mirour of his mynde,
> In which he saugh al holly hire figure;
> And that he wel koude in his herte fynde,

It was to hym a right good aventure
To love swich oon, and if he dede his cure
To serven hir, yet myghte he falle in grace,
Or ellis for oon of hire servantes pace;

Imaginynge that travaille nor grame
Ne myghte for so goodly oon be lorn
As she, ne hym for his desir no shame,
Al were it wist, but in prise and up-born
Of alle lovers wel more than biforn;
Thus argumented he in his gynnynge,
Ful unavysed of his woo comynge.

Thus took he purpos loves craft to suwe,
And thoughte he wolde werken pryvely,
First to hiden his desir in muwe
From every wight yborn, al outrely,
But he myghte ought recovered be therby;
Remembryng hym that love to wide yblowe
Yelt bittre fruyt, though swete seed be sowe.
(I 365-85)

I have quoted these three stanzas in full because they represent the movement between the two registers of love commentary outlined here. Troilus' imagination takes the form of religious language, signalled explicitly by the "grace" of line 370; we have here the secular equivalent of Langland's "Kynde Knowyng". Line 378 straightforwardly reminds us that Chaucer is keeping nothing in reserve, enabling us to share completely the dramatic irony. The next five lines, 379-83, have moved from idealism to game, with its slightly demeaning furtiveness indicated in "pryvely" and "in muwe": Troilus cannot escape the cupboard. The last two lines summon up in Troilus' mind a memory of conventional wisdom which is in its grammatical ("though") as well as its lexical structure ("bittre"/ "swete") oxymoronic.

The oxymoron is more than a rhetorical device in *Troilus*, as in some other medieval love poetry. It is in its own right a theme, the intolerable contradictions of human love, and a mode, a way of containing these contradictions as all passion, both sublime and commonplace, does. For the oxymoron always combines opposites, such as eternity and time, love and war, God and man, and in *Troilus* its terms deliberately combine religious passion and ludic casuistry, sympathy and irony. Pandarus' role in the poem is to be the oxymoronic counter to Troilus ("By his contrari is everything declared", I 637), and the major speaker of amplified oxymoronic set pieces. One of the most famous is his "Wo worth the faire gemme vertulees" (II 344ff.), in which there are two kinds of dramatic irony: first, this is the burden of what Pandarus will say of Criseyde after her desertion of Troilus; second, Criseyde's "routhe" (II 349), not Criseyde herself but love in a besieged Troy, is "the faire gemme vertulees". The defect in Pandarus' use of oxymoron is that he perpetually looks at only one aspect of its Janus-face:

For thilke grownd that bereth the wedes wikke
Bereth ek thise holsom herbes, as ful ofte
Next the foule netle, rough and thikke,
The rose waxeth swoote and smothe and softe;
And next the valeye is the hil o-lofte;
And next the derke nyght the glade morwe;
And also joie is next the fyn of sorwe . . .
(I 946-52

These lines are meant to be encouraging, but they are also capable of being acutely depressing - after one has experienced the "glade morwe" and the "joie". In this case, oxymoron fulfils on the linguistic level the role of Boethian fortune; it is a microcosm of the structure both of medieval tragedy and, by simple inversion, comedy. Moreover, because oxymoron always implies a temporary union of opposites, it enacts for an audience the condition of human love; and within the poem it holds together "contrary states of the soul" by nothing more than poetic virtuosity. Lastly - and this is the origin of critical debate on *Troilus* about irony and sympathy - any one reading of an oxymoron at once implies its opposite. The structural equivalent of oxymoron is therefore dialectic, a simultaneous potential of thesis and antithesis. Structurally, oxymoron leads to a palinode which both is and is not palinodal: while we are physiologically unable to perceive simultaneously that a line drawing, say, can be two things at once, we must at some stage accept cognitively that this is so. To call the ending epilogue or palinode is simple to divulge the shape of our original impression. The terms of the ending overtly contrast divine love with earthly love seen as a human game. These are terms very similar to those of the first three books until Criseyde shatters the ludic structures. Yet from the high mutuality of Book III's consummation to Troilus' death we are made to experience an oxymoronic transformation of these terms: human love seen, ambivalently, as a divine game.

III

Is there any sense, then, in which the epilogue's superb praise of divine love can be seen as compatible with Book III's celebration of human mutuality? The study of irony provides a little new insight, for the epilogue is necessary to the poem's processes of irony.

The last six stanzas, from "Swich fyn hath lo! this Troilus for love" (V 1828), are a microcosm of the conflicts of the poem: they are also a last example of the interest in pattern displayed throughout, for they are carefully structured into two parallel groups of three. The first of the parallel groups, stanza 262 (V 1828-34) and 265 (1849-55), depends on the same device of repeated exclamation, "Swich fyn" and "Lo here" respectively. Stanza 262 is a valediction to Troilus, and its use of "fyn" to mean both "goal" and "close" is drawn probably from Boethius' Book IV metre 6, in which Philosophy recommends the view from the fixed stars as that which reveals the fixed universal - God - and transcendent love, "the fyn of good". This is the metre from which Stroud plausibly

argues that Troilus' astral journey is a reward for his earthly love, "by love retorned". The stanza combines a tender final look at Troilus' noble qualities, his "grete worthynesse", his "noblesse" and the pattern of his love and death with a note of *contemptus mundi*:

> Swich fyn hath false worldes brotelnesse!
> And thus bigan his lovyng of Criseyde,
> As I have told, and in this wise he deyde.
> (V 1832-4)

Stanza 262, in short, is a valediction of the poem's narrative. In Stanza 265, the note of *contemptus mundi* is much stronger, but the couplet again melts into a regretful tenderness:

> Lo here, of payens corsed olde rites!
> Lo here, what alle hire goddes may availle!
> Lo here, thise wrecched worldes appetites!
> Lo here, the fyn and guerdoun for travaille
> Of Jove, Appollo, of Mars, of swich rascaille!
> Lo here, the forme of olde clerkes speche
> In poetrie, if ye hire bokes seche!
> (V 1849-55)

The moral condemnation of the first three lines is sweeping; but the last two lines of the stanza make it clear that Chaucer has slipped from talking about the craft of love to talking about the craft of poetry, and we may refer this shift of attention at least to the two previous lines (1852-3). We may make more sense of their reference if we recall that Mars is addressed in the proem to Book IV, that Apollo is the tutelary deity of the muse of poetry, Clio, addressed in the proem to Book II and the muse of epic poetry, Calliope, addressed in the proem to Book III, and that Jove is not only the chief of all pagan powers and gods addressed in every proem but is named specifically, with Mars and Calliope, in the chain-of-love proem to Book III. By this stage of the epilogue we have receded from the narrative proper to its frame, from the play of emotion to its recollection.

The second group, stanzas 263 (1835-41) and 266 (1856-62) begin with apostrophes to an assumed audience, "O yonge fresshe folkes" and "O moral Gower . . ." respectively, and introduce in both cases the sententious third group, stanzas 264 (1842-8) and 267 (1863-9). Both these stanzas deal with the love of Christ, which stanza 264 commends and stanza 267 actively celebrates. There is a double structure in this pattern which in its religious orientation fulfils the whole poem's patterning, and resembles - in its pattern of *exclamatio*, direct address to an audience, and exemplary pointing of a sententious moral - the formal structure of the poem's set-piece overt ironies. It is ironic only by the broadest possible definition of irony in its contradiction between *contemptus mundi* and tenderness, the very contradiction which is usually seen in its juxtaposition with the central love-episode. I cannot see how we can do without the concept of duality here, and it is a duality which has been present throughout in the

interrelation of the poem's two major fields of irony, dramatic, stressing fatal necessity, and voluntary, stressing fatal free will. However logically incompatible, both paired opposites - necessity and contempt, tenderness and will - are true. If it suggests that there is nothing absolute about human happiness, it also suggests that there is nothing absolute about *contemptus mundi*. But there is everything absolute about the love of God, and the consolatory surge of these stanzas is an act of faith in the Pauline sense: we do not see, and therefore we hope. We hope that flesh may be redeemed by spirit, dialectic resolved in unity and duality dispelled in triplicity. *Troilus and Criseyde* is, by design, a structure of duality: "Thus goth the world; God shilde us from meschaunce!" There remains the hope, at once supportive and daunting, that Providence is otherwise.

The consolatory movement of the final six stanzas has a retrospective effect on the three preceding stanzas, 259 to 261 (V 1807-27). Troilus' astral journey is developed from Boccaccio's *Teseida* and from Dante, but its inspiration is in this case Boethian, significantly not from one of Boethius' proses but from two poems, from Book IV metre 6 and from metre 7 of the same book, which foreshadows the whole structure of the poem's narrative, opening with the Trojan wars and ending with the stars ("For the erthe overcomen yeveth the sterres"). Retrospectively, when Christian faith has been fully articulated, the sequence is consolatory, a moving demonstration of grace and an assurance of transcending mortality. On the first reading, however, it is surely not consolatory; it is rather the quintessence of *contemptus mundi*, Troilus as Boethius. And what we do not know is more important than what we can later discover. The debate about the exact quality of Troilus' journey and what it represents is not entirely relevant to its prime function in the epilogue. For we do not know why Troilus laughs; we cannot see what he sees and, being alive, we cannot now feel what he feels. The ironic spectator is thrown down from his seat and onto his knees; he becomes the butt of another's superiority. It is a humbling reversal and it ensures, as nothing else in the poem ensures, that we cannot retain an ironic response to the whole work. For the epilogue exists to shock us out of irony, not into it. It confers on the whole poem the qualities of the central love-episode: authenticity, universality, impenetrability.[19] It is not, we find, a poem that works by special pleading, for in the end we find that we are in the position of the mortal Troilus. This is like a *Consolation* written by "Boethius" the stooge: the questions are indeed real, paradoxical, unresolvable by mortal minds; and that is exactly why we require that leap of faith which alone can offer a resolution. In a sense undreamed by Pandarus, *Successore novo vincitur omnis amor.* The cure for love is love itself.

In short, there is no such thing as a valid "ironic" reading of *Troilus and Criseyde*; the only valid questions, pointed by the poem's multiple ironies, are about the limits applicable to "sympathy". For the tragedy of the poem is not so much to do with its characters as it is abstract, a pattern of mutability in which passion is overborne by circumstance, and the eternalizing impulse of human love left standing by short time. It is a performance

consistent with Aristotle's standard: design is exalted above character, just as for Aristotle the monochrome sketch is preferable to the finished painting, and the pattern of the work, to use Aristotle's analogy like the rhythm of the dance, bodies forth a universal principle of underlying flux.[20] In such an imitation of life and change there can be a poem, a "refutation of time", but there can never be unity. There is no denying Elizabeth Salter's judgment that the epilogue is severe; and, depending on one's response to oxymoron, one may even feel with her that the nobility of the poem lies in Book III. Yet the harshness of the epilogue is the grim guarantor of the poet's truth. There is a very real place in this for discord; or in Spenser's words, too suited to the occasion of this essay, "All Musick sleepes, where death doth leade the daunce".[21]

NOTES

1 Jorge Luis Borges, *A Personal Anthology*, ed. A. Kerrigan (London, 1972) pp.39.40.

2 Elizabeth Salter, "*Troilus and Criseyde*: A Reconsideration", in *Patterns of Love and Courtesy*, ed. John Lawlor (London, 1966) pp.86-106, referring to C.S. Lewis, *The Allegory of Love* (Oxford, 1936) p.197.

3 Salter, pp.89, 91, 103-4.

4 John P. McCall, "Troilus and Criseyde", in *Companion to Chaucer Studies*, ed. Beryl Rowland (Toronto, 1968), pp.370-84. McCall's article contains a useful bibliography. Of earlier criticism, I shall pay special attention to E.T. Donaldson, *Speaking of Chaucer* (London, 1970), pp.46-101 (subsequent references will be incorporated in the text); D.W. Robertson, Jr., "Chaucerian Tragedy", *ELH* 19 (1952) pp.1-37, rpt. in *Chaucer Criticism*, II: *Troilus and Criseyde and the Minor Poems*, ed. R.J. Schoeck and J. Taylor (Notre Dame, 1961) pp.86-121; and a modified version in his *A Preface to Chaucer* (Princeton, 1962) pp.472-502. This is a classic statement of an "ironic" reading. See also Charles Muscatine, *Chaucer and the French Tradition* (Berkeley, 1957) pp.124-65: Charles A. Owen Jr., "The Significance of Chaucer's Revision of *Troilus and Criseyde*", *Modern Philology* 55 (1957-8) pp.1-5, rpt. Schoeck and Taylor, pp.160-6; Morton W. Bloomfield, "Distance and Predestination in *Troilus and Criseyde*", *PMLA* 72 (1957) pp.14-26, rpt. Schoeck and Taylor, pp.196-210; Donald R. Howard, *The Three Temptations* (Princeton, 1966); Anthony E. Farnham, "Chaucerian Irony and the Ending of the *Troilus*", *Chaucer Review* I (1966-7) pp.207-16. I have also consulted Robert apRoberts, "Criseyde's Infidelity and the Moral of the Troilus", *Speculum* 44 (1969) pp.383-402, and "The Boethian God and the Audience of the *Troilus*", *JEGP* 69 (1970) pp.425-36; Stephen A. Barney, "Troilus Bound", *Speculum* 47 (1972) pp.445-58; C. David Benson, "'O Nyce World': What Chaucer really found in Guido Delle Colonne's History of Troy", *Chaucer Review* 13 (1979) pp.308-15; Georgia Crampton, "Action and Passion in Chaucer's *Troilus*", *Medium Ævum* 43 (1974) pp.23-36; Lonnie J. Durham, "Love and Death in *Troilus and Criseyde*", *Chaucer Review* 3 (1968-9) pp.1-11; Lawrence Eldredge, "Boethian Epistemology and Chaucer's *Troilus* in the light of Fourteenth Century thought", *Mediaevalia* 2 (1976) pp.50-75; Joseph E. Gallaher, "Theology and Intention in Chaucer's *Troilus*", *Chaucer Review* 7 (1972-3) pp.44-66; John M. Ganim, "Time and Tone in Chaucer's *Troilus*", *ELH* 43 (1976) pp.141-53; Richard F. Green, "Troilus and the Game of Love", *Chaucer Review* 13 (1979) pp.201-20; Elizabeth R. Hatcher, "Chaucer and the Psychology of Fear: Troilus in Book V", *ELH* 40 (1973) pp.307-24; Monica E. McAlpine, *The Genre of Troilus and Criseyde* (Ithaca, 1978); Colin Manlove, "*Rooteles Moot Grene Soone Deye*: the Helplessness of Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde*", *Essays and Studies* 31 (1978) p.1-22; Richard H. Osberg, "Between the Motion and the Act: Intentions and Ends in Chaucer's *Troilus*", *ELH* 48 (1981) pp.257-70; Edmund Reiss, "Troilus and the Failure of Understanding", *MLQ* 29 (1968) pp.131-44; Donald W. Rowe, *O Love, O Charite: Contraries Harmonised in Chaucer's Troilus* (Carbondale, Illinois, 1976); A.C. Spearing, *Chaucer: Troilus and Criseyde* (London, 1976); Martin Stevens, "The Winds of Fortune in the *Troilus*", *Chaucer Review* 13 (1979) pp.294-307; Davis Taylor, "The Terms of Love: a Study of Troilus's Style", *Speculum* 51 (1976) pp.69-90; Ann Chalmers Watt, "Chaucerian Selves - especially Two Serious Ones", *Chaucer Review* 4 (1969-70) pp.229-41; Rose A. Zimbardo, "Creator and Created: the Generic Perspective of Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde*", *Chaucer Review* 11 (1976-7) pp.285-98; and, more generally, Donald R. Howard, "Medieval Poems and Medieval Society", *Medievalia & Humanistica* 3 (1971) pp.99-115, and Gerald Morgan, "Natural and Rational Love in Medieval Literature", *Yearbook of English Studies* 7 (1977) pp.43-52.

5 Wayne C. Booth, *A Rhetoric of Irony* (Chicago, 1974). I have also profited by a reading of D.H. Green, *Irony in the Medieval Romance* (Cambridge, 1979). Green's analyses of irony in *Troilus* are mainly addressed to what I here consider as dramatic irony.

6 I have discussed this question in my essay "Skelton's Use of Persona", *Essays in Criticism* 30 (1980) pp.9-28; see particularly pp.9-11 (on *Troilus*).

7 All quotation of *Troilus* is from *The Book of Troilus and Criseyde by Geoffrey Chaucer*, ed. R.K. Root (Princeton, 1926; rpt. 1945). The dramatic irony has often been noted since Kittredge; see McCall.

8 See Bartlett J. and Helen W. Whiting, *Proverbs, Sentences and Proverbial Phrases from English Writings Mainly before 1500* (Cambridge, Mass., 1968) p.609; *The Oxford Dictionary of English Proverbs*, revised by F.P. Wilson (Oxford, 1970) p.584.

9 P. Vergili Maronis, *Æneidos: Liber Secundus*, ed. R.G. Austin (Oxford, 1964) lines 624-31. ("Then in truth all Ilium before my eyes was sinking into the flames; I saw Neptune's Troy uprooted and overturned. It was like an ancient rowan-tree high in the mountains when farmers all around, with stroke after stroke of their axes, strive to fell it. It is bruised with their iron; it begins to tremble and threatens to fall; its crest shakes, its boughs sway, until gradually, overcome by its wounds, it gives a last groan and, torn down from its place, drags ruin down the mountain-ridges.").

10 G.G. Sedgewick, *Of Irony, Especially in Drama* (Toronto, 1935) pp.32-3.

11 *Essays of John Dryden*, ed. W.P. Ker, 2 vols. (London, 1900) II, pp.254-7, cited by Richard L. Hoffman, *Ovid and the Canterbury Tales* (London, 1966) p.vii.

12 John F. Adams, "Irony in Troilus' Apostrophe to the Vacant House of Criseyde", *MLQ* 34 (1963) pp.61-5. For an ironic reading of the speech, which is ill-at-ease with the "pun", see Ida L. Gordon, *The Double Sorrow of Troilus* (Oxford, 1970), pp.132-8; and for a much less ironic reading, Morton W. Bloomfield, "Troilus' Paraclausithyron and its Setting", *Neuphilologische Mitteilungen* 73 (1972) pp.15-24.

13 Alan Gaylord, "The lesson of the Troilus: Chastisement and Correction", in *Essays on Troilus and Criseyde*, ed. Mary Salu (Cambridge, 1979) pp.23-42.

14 This objection can be made to reports of contemporary understanding of *Troilus*, such as Usk's, emphasized by Gaylord, p.39, or that reported by Lee W. Patterson, "Ambiguity and Interpretation: A Fifteenth Century Reading of *Troilus and Criseyde*", *Speculum* 54 (1979) pp.297-330.

15 Alfred David, "Chaucerian Comedy and Criseyde", in *Essays*, ed. Salu, pp.90-104 (p.99).

16 Theodore A. Stroud, "Boethius' Influence on Chaucer's *Troilus*", *Modern Philology* 49 (1951-2) pp.1-9, rpt. Schoeck and Taylor, pp.122-35.

17 The Works of Geoffrey Chaucer, ed. F.N. Robinson, 2nd ed. (London, 1957) p.265: the *Retraccioun*s.

18 The quotations are, in order, from *Inferno* v. 103 and 106, and *Paradiso* xxxiii, 145.

19 The phrase is that of Charles A. Owen Jr., "Mimetic Form in the Central Love Scene of *Troilus and Criseyde*", *Modern Philology* 67 (1969-70) pp.125-32.

20 The interpretation of Aristotle is not that of Lewis but that of John Jones, *Aristotle and Greek Tragedy* (London, 1965).

21 From *The Shepheardes Calender*, November: the lament for Dido.

DEVELOPMENT OF THE ART OF PORTRAITURE IN CHAUCER'S *GENERAL PROLOGUE*

By CHARLES A. OWEN, JR.

> But nathelees, whil I have tyme and space,
> Er that I ferther in this tale pace,
> Me thynketh it acordaunt to resoun
> To telle you al the condicioun
> Of ech of hem, so as it seemed me,
> And whiche they weren, and of what degree,
> And eek in what array that they were inne. (A41)

Ralph Baldwin, in his very fine discussion of "characterization", tries to derive from this passage a set of categories for complete analysis of the Prologue portraits.[1] "Condicioun" becomes the equivalent of the rhetoricians' *notatio*, "the interior or moral portrayal"; "whiche" represents *effictio*, the physical make-up; "degree" is status; and "array" clothing. He then draws up a table listing the number of items in each portrait devoted to each category. These results, though suggestive, are frequently misleading. We learn for instance that the Knight has only nine entries for condicioun and his son the Squire fifteen. If the many physical activities of the Squire qualify as *notatio*, where are we to place the campaigns of his father, all but one of them religious? Should the Knight's fine horses figure in the rank or the array column? And what do we make of the word "shaply" used of the Guildsmen, who in Baldwin's table have no entry for *effictio*? Baldwin, I think, comes closer to the mark when he speaks of Chaucer's "technique of suggestiveness and contrapuntal detail".[2] Physical detail almost always has moral import; the overt moral comment has its literal meaning qualified by context. The portraits avoid the hard-and-fast categories implied in the Baldwin table; they avoid system of every kind. In the relaxed conversational tone of the introduction, "al the condicioun . . . so as it semed me" applies to the Impressionistic nature of the whole portrait; and "whiche they weren and of what degree" means quite literally vocation and rank. The statement does promise a portrait for each pilgrim, a task Chaucer gave himself only after experiment with a number of the descriptions, a task he did not live to complete. The study of Chaucer's art in the portraits will reveal a change in his approach to the task, a development of new techniques, and an increasingly critical attitude to the society he was attempting to describe.

The art of Chaucer's portraits in the Prologue is a whole new art. There had been nothing like it in the past, not even a suggestion of it in his own previous efforts at *descriptio*. Once developed, the art proved distinctive. Portraits in the Chaucerian

manner declare themselves at once, whether directed at political targets in the twentieth century or functioning as part of the Miller's narrative in the fourteenth.[3] Curiously not all of Chaucer's descriptions of people in the *Canterbury Tales* qualify. Alisoun and Virginia are not only poles apart as characters. The *descriptiones* that seek to give them life are similarly distinct. On the one hand Virginia, victim of the nefarious Apius's plot, falls victim likewise to rhetorical convention and her function in the tale. Nature as supreme artist boasts in a long *prosopopeia* of making Virginia "to the worshipe of my lord". The subsequent description of her qualities does little but prepare her for her role in the story. She becomes almost a caricature of chastity. Alisoun, while similarly performing a limited function in the tale, reflects the narrator's delight, communicated through taste, smell, sight, touch, hearing and even a suggestion of some of the kinesthetic senses - "Long as a mast and upright as a bolt". A sensual delight breaks through every effort to focus on her demure clothing, the girl's physical appeal irresistibly seductive to reader as to author.

Stimulus for the new art was inherent in what Chaucer was setting out to do - though he could have had, I think, only a partial vision of what his efforts were leading up to. Fictions within a fiction, yes, and the variety of characters to justify the variety of tales, but a character who would grow beyond her portrait and persuade him to give her another tale? The immediate task involved the fifteen, nineteen, or twenty-four portraits,[4] one after another, and the development of the techniques that would make them sufficiently interesting to hold an audience, and memorable enough to be recalled later.

And at a knyght than wol I first bigynne (A42)

Does the redundant "first" betray Chaucer's sense of the challenge he had given himself? Is the "a" of "a knyght", both in this line and the next, a first step in the direction of solution?

Cicero, Horace, and Matthew of Vendome had asserted the importance of a name in the *descriptio* of a person. Horace even went so far as to recommend a well-known name - an Achilles, a Ulysses, a Priam, or a Nestor, and Matthew had added the possibility of an *interpretatio* like the one Chaucer provided for St Cecilia.[6] "A Knyght there was" flies in the face of this counsel - and sets up one of the governing principles of the Chaucerian portrait - that it should build toward an identity rather than assert it. A Knyght is indefinite. After the specifications of the portrait, many of them themselves proper names, he will become *the* Knight. But he will still be capable of development, of adding to his identity, as he does when he surprises us with his interruption of the Monk. Only two of the pilgrims have names in their portraits. One of these comes at the end (the Friar) and, providing the rhyme word for the first line of the next portrait, survives perhaps from the plan for three nun's priests rather than the one we meet up with in the B^2 fragment? The other pilgrim is *called* Madame Eglentyne, though as mother superior and bride of Christ she must also have had another

name. That we never learn what it is paradoxically contributes to her identity.

But we have skipped ahead of the Knight's portrait with this consideration of names. The tacit understanding for descriptions of people that had developed in the middle ages held that the physical should precede the moral, *effictio* before *notatio*, and *effictio* ordered from the top down. Chaucer carefully avoids this ordering not only in the Knight's portrait but in all the others as well.[8] Instead, he starts by telling us the general impression the Knight makes. Worthyness, the list of qualities associated with chivalry, the use of the negative superlative[9] "no man ferre", above all the consistency of his "love" - "fro the tyme that he first bigan / To riden out" - all these come to us in a plain, conversational tone, with concentration on the information rather than the style, versatile, even agile in its variations of word order,[10] but with none of the periodic formality and metaphoric point lavished on the spring, in the opening lines of the Prologue. This conversational tone confirms the context given us in the introduction, the pilgrimage as a personal experience, the group of people "sondry folk, by aventure yfalle / In felawshipe," Chaucer learning of them in much the same way he is informing us of them, impressionistically, without allowing system to dominate.

The relationship Chaucer establishes with us, his audience, is similarly informal. He can address us directly to explain his procedure as he does both before and after the set of descriptions -

> Me thynketh it acordaunt to resoun
> To telle yow al the condicioun
> Of ech of hem, so as it semed me . . . (A39)

and

> Now have I toold you soothly, in a clause,
> Th'estaat, th'array, the nombre, and eek the cause
> Why that assembled was this compaignye
> In Southwerk . . . (A718)
> But now is tyme to yow for to telle
> How that we baren us that ilke nyght. (A72)
> But first I pray yow, of youre curteisye,
> That ye n'arette it nat my vileynye,
> Though that I pleynly speke in this mateere . . . (A727)
> Also I prey yow to foryeve it me,
> Al have I nat set folk in hir degree
> Heere in this tale, as that they sholde stonde . . . (A745)

And he can remind us of the relationship, as he does in the transition to *effictio* in the Knight's portrait, "But, for to tellen yow of his array . . ." and in the first-person qualifications and reminders scattered through the other portraits, "I gesse", "as I was ware", "I seigh", "I undertake", "I dorste swere", "But wel I woot", and so on.

The list of battles featured in the Knight's portrait provides

a paradigm for Chaucer's arrangement of any set of particulars. The clue for a meaning precedes the list in the line "As wel in cristendom as in hethenesse", it repeats itself in the geography of the battles, in the negative superlative, "No Cristen man so ofte . . .", in the "foughten for oure feith", and in the exceptional "Agayn another hethen . . .". The list is making its point in the noting of the battle *not* for our faith and at the same time winning our confidence in the probity of a report that does not avoid anomaly or contradiction. The order for the battles runs from the most famous to the most recent (reflected in the preeminence of the knight at the "tables of honor"), to the first, to a filling in of the geographical circle in a counterclockwise direction, to the most prominent area (the Grete See) of his activities, to the number of great battles he had participated in, to individual exploits, to the final exceptional expedition in a war between heathens. Few readers, even fewer listeners, would follow this shifting rationale for order; at the same time few would fail to sense the qualified meaning of the list, the importance of the battles, the fact that the list is neither entirely random nor entirely systematic, and, in addition to the religious motivation, the lifetime commitment. The last exceptional item picks up in "This ilke worthy knyght . . ." the earlier thematic dominant with its positive element in love and goes on to add an important distinction:

> And everemoore he hadde a sovereyn prys;
> And though that he were worthy, he was wys,
> And of his port as meeke as is a mayde. (A69)

Two things set off this segment of the portrait. We get the only logical subordination in the thirty-six lines and the only overt *comparatio*. Whatever the meaning of worthy, and I would suggest that "sovereyn prys" implies more than just bravery, certainly the meaning of "wys" cannot be limited to prudence. The "Of his porte as meeke as is a mayde" suggests the quiet confidence of a man whose battle-exploits have had no coarsening effect. The wisdom of such a man is not just negative. Here we have an example of what Geoffrey of Vinsauf enthusiastically recommends - *Collatio occulta*. No grammatical sign compares the Knight to the run of men we loosely call worthy. But the comparison is implicitly there. Unlike most, this worthy man the Knight is wise.[11]

As if aware of the combination of negative and positive elements in what he has just been telling us, Chaucer culminates his praise of the Knight with two striking statements. In starkest contrast, four negatives prepare the ground for the single positive "he was" and the three intensely meaningful adjectives that ensue:

> He nevere yet no vileynye ne sayde
> In al his lyf unto no maner wight.
> He was a verray, parfit, gentil knyght. (A72)

The negatives throughout the portrait have had a positive superlative "sentence". They help to project the idea of "non-pareil",

wrongly applied in my judgement to the whole set of pilgrims, but certainly relevant to the knight.[12] Research has found historical parallels for segments of the knight's career.[13] It has failed, however, to establish an historical identity. What we have here experienced is the building up of an identity that has *no* fellow. However hard to believe the virtues of such a man may be, his uniqueness at least conforms to our deepest knowledge of people.

The portrait has conveyed some of its meaning indirectly. In turning to *effictio* Chaucer does not abandon *notatio*. The very brevity has implications. It is not the physical presence that has weight. The contrast between horses and man, the condition of his clothing confirm the negatives and positives of the *notatio*. "But he was nat gay . . .". The observation will have relevance to the portrait of his son. The implications of contrast need not redound to the discredit of either man. The outermost element in the knight's portrait, a bismotering of his "gypon", consecrates his warfare to pilgrimage with no stain of vanity. The inadvertence is only part of this multi-faceted paradox.

Sound patterns support the informality of the language in the Knight's portrait. The rhymes are unobtrusive and only occasionally does alliteration lend emphasis, as in the b's and f's in 60-4, the negative n's in 71-2, and the "worthy-wys", "meeke-mayde", and "good-gay" pairings towards the end of the portrait. At the very start of the Squire's description we sense an important set of differences. The l's of "lovyere" and "lusty" prepare for the line "With lokkes crulle as they were leyd in presse" (81) and for the later

> Of his stature he was of evene lengthe,
> And wonderly delyvere, and of greet strengthe. (A84)

The shocking *comparatio* "as they were leyd in presse", the first of four in the 22 lines, the shorthand *effictio*, starting at the top, which turns out to be only a part of the *effictio*, the special vocabulary, "lovyere, crulle, evene" (meaning average, but with a positive resonance), "wonderly delyvere", alert us to the rapid shifts, the sparkle and movement, that imitate almost without hope of catching their elusive subject. "Chyvachie" contrasts with the chivalry of the Knight's portrait, an expedition rather than a life-long commitment, the whole completed in a single line, evaluated in another, "And born hym weel, as of so litel space", and dedicated not "to our lord" but, reprising "lovyere": "In hope to stonden in his lady grace" (A88). "Embrouded" signals a return to *effictio*, to the clothing that should indeed follow physique. But the "was he", the "al ful of fresshe floures", and the climactic "He was as fressh as is the month of May" suggest that, as with the Knight but in reverse, *effictio* is *notatio*, surfaces, hair-do and clothing, are the "man". The list of his talents comes to us as activities, as verbs, and throws light on the line, "Syngynge he was, or floytynge *al the day*" - songs and music perforce of his own composition - and accompanying such other activities as jousting, portraying, and writing. The nights are also full, but with a more single-minded activity:

So hoote he lovede that by nyghtertale
He sleep namoore than dooth a nyghtyngale. (A98)

The hyperbole of meaning is matched by hyperbole of rhyme, the wit of the narrator emerging as amusement and enjoyment rather than condemnation. We expect the next line

Curteis he was, lowely, and servysable (A99)

to be directed to his lady, but it is surprisingly transformed by the final line to a wider and more disciplined "sentence". We are reminded that father and son ride together on pilgrimage, in communication with each other as the Franklin and his son turn out not to be. The sense for the Squire of potential in many directions, reflected in the portrait by the sudden shifts, the plethora of verbs, contrasts with the integrated achievement of the knight, his values clear, his priorities long established, his life and his portrait deliberate and disciplined.

I hesitate to suggest that the paradox of contrast and communion between father and son was not Chaucer's original intention. But the first lines of the Yeoman's portrait suggest contiguity with the Knight's:

A Yeman hadde he and servantz namo
At that time, for hym liste ride so. (A102)

And two later lines complete a contrast in the way the Knight and the Prioress choose to ride on pilgrimage:

Another Nonne with hire hadde she,
That was hire chapeleyne, and preestes thre . . . (A164)

That the second nun and the three priests were at one point to receive no portrait identities, with the three priests named to distinguish them from one another; that the five churls were once to have been simply listed; that when Chaucer decided to tell us "al the condicioun of ech" of his pilgrims, he substituted monk and friar for two of the priests, having previously blurred the distinction between Knight's and Prioress's entourages by adding the Squire - evidence for all of this will not be conclusive. But I think it is worth presenting in its imperfection, because it perhaps outweighs evidence against and because it contributes to a consistent explanation for all the kinds of evidence the *Canterbury Tales* presents us with. This evidence includes the reassignment of tales, the number of pilgrims in the group, the number of tales to be told, the geographical references, the days of the journey, the different endings envisaged, the fragments in which the tales come to us, the retraction with its strange way of referring to both the *Parson's Tale* and the *Canterbury Tales*, the early manuscripts, the state of the text.[14]

Some of the elements in the Squire's portrait suggest a later stage in the development of portrait technique than the Knight's. Confidence with language, a willingness to risk decoration emerge especially in the use of the simile. When Chaucer started the long

set of portraits, he recognized that amplification was not the quality to be sought, that verbal elaboration of all kinds was to be avoided. Distinction rather than similarity was the point to be stressed; hence the resort at first to negatives ("no man ferre", "no Cristen man so oft", "he nevere yet no vileynie ne seyd") and the very sparse use of simile. These negatives frequently qualify as the *comparatio occulta* recommended by Geoffrey of Vinsauf. The form that might be termed a negative superlative is particularly apt to occur in the portraits of the most unusual pilgrims, the non-pareils like the Friar, the Man of Law, the Franklin, the Shipman, the Physician, the Wife of Bath, the Parson, the Miller, the Reeve, the Summoner and the Pardoner. The first one used of the Knight gives the typical form: "And thereto hadde he riden, no man ferre". The incidence of the negative superlative relates to substance rather than a developing technique; it occurs twice in the Knight's portrait and intermittently throughout the others, including both the Parson's and the Pardoner's. The figures on the simile suggest a quite different situation. They are as follows:

Knight 1 in 36 lines	as is a mayde
Squire 4 in 22 lines	as they were leyd in presse
	as it were a meede
	as is the month of May
	than doth a nyghtyngale
Yeoman 1 in 17 lines	as pointe of spere
Prioress 1 in 45 lines	as glas
Monk 8 in 43 lines	as dooth the chapel belle
	likned til a fissh
	as fowel in flight
	as any glas
	as he hadde been enoynt
	as a forneys of a leed
	as a forpyned goost
	as is a berye

(note "nat worth an oystre" and "yaf nat of that text a pulled hen".)

Friar 8 in 64 lines	as the flour-de-lys
	as a championn
	as it were right a whelp
	lyk a cloisterer
	as is a povre scoler
	lyk a maister or a pope
	as a belle out of the presse
	as doon the sterres in the frosty nyght
Merchant 0 in 15 lines	
Clerk 1 in 24 lines	as is a rake
Sergeant of the Lawe 0 in 15 lines	
Frankeleyn 2 in 30 lines	as is the dayesye
	as morne milk
Guildsmen 0 in 18 lines	
Doctour of Phisik 0 in 34 lines	

Wife of Bath 1 in 32 lines	as is a bokeler or a targe
Parson 0 in 52 lines	

though "For if gold ruste, what shal iren do?" and the numerous references to shepherds, flocks, and wolves represent extended metaphor, Baldwin (*op.cit.* p.46) calls these "expanded similes". Note too "spiced" conscience.

Ploughman 0 in 13 lines	
Miller 4 in 22 lines	as any sowe or fox
	as though it were a spade
	as the brustles of a sowes erys
	as a greet forneys
Manciple 0 in 20 lines	
Reeve 4 in 36 lines	lyk a preest biforn
	ylyk a staf
	as of the deeth
	as is a frere aboute
Summoner 6 in 46 lines	Fyr-red (I have counted this since the meaning is red as fire, but not "cherubynnes").
	as a sparwe
	as blood
	as he were wood
	as kan the pope (see Friar)
	as it were for an ale-stake
Pardoner 6 in 46 lines	was nevere trompe of half so greet a soun
	as wex
	as dooth a strike of flex
	as an hare
	as hath a goot
	as it were late shave.

The marked increase in the incidence of similes for four of the five churls and for all three of the possibly inserted portraits would seem to be beyond the realm of chance.[15] This increase holds for the portraits in the three fabliaux of fragment A:

Nicholas 2 in 31 lines	lik a mayden
	as is the roote of lycorys or any cetewale
Alysoun 15 in 38 lines	as any wezele
	as morne milk (see the Franklin)
	col-blak
	as any sloo
	than is the newe perejonette tree
	than the wolle is of a wether
	than in the Tour the noble yforged newe
	As any swalwe sittynge on a berne
	as any kid or calf folwynge his dame
	as bragot or the meeth
	Or hoord of apples leyd in hey or heeth

	as is a joly colt
	as is a mast
	as is a bolt
	as is the boos of a bokeler
Absolom 4 in 27 lines	as the gold
	as a fanne large and brode
	as goos
	as is the blosme upon the rys.
Symkin the Miller, his wife and daughter 5 in 52 lines	
	as any pecok
	as an ape
	as is a pye
	as water in a dich
	as glas
Perkyn Revelour 3 in 34 lines	
	as goldfynch in the shawe
	as a berye
	as is the hyve ful of hony sweete,

It might well be argued that the number of similes in these portraits reflects the proportion devoted to *effictio*, that similes, especially the briefest and most conventional, are more apt to be used of physical detail. Yet the Yeoman's portrait, all *effictio*, has only a single simile; the Guildsmen's and the Shipman's have none. The portraits of the Prioress and the Wife of Bath resemble the Squire's in that they contain a vivid series of physical images. Yet their portraits, much longer than the Squire's, have only a single simile each. Not just the incidence but the quality of the similes varies. The "sharp as point of spere" of the Yeoman's portrait, the "eyen greye as glas" of the Prioress's have the effect of the commonplace. But the "hat / As brood as is a bokeler or a targe" suggests the Wife of Bath's aggressive defences; it is the first of the similes to have resonance for the character. The final three similes of the Squire's portrait, images from nature applied to the artificial, reach a climax in the nightingale, whose song as well as his wakefulness applies. The combination of negative and simile in the Friar's portrait again breaks new ground.

> For ther he was nat lyk a cloysterer
> With a thredbare cope, as is a povre scoler . . . 260

These negative similes add to the images of poverty explicitly rejected by Huberd.

> For unto swich a worthy man as he
> Acorded nat, as by his facultee
> To have with sike lazars acqueyntaunce.
> It is nat honest, it may nat avaunce,
> For to deelen with no swich poraille . . . 247

The negative similes help to project the ironic absurdity of this friar's attitudes. A series of linked similes projects the hard animal vulgarity of the Miller; a similarly linked set leads up to

the conjectural metaphor of the Pardoner's portrait:

> I trowe he were a geldyng or a mare 691

Certain other features that distinguish some of the "late" portraits suggest the widening range of artistic possibilities as Chaucer worked on them. For instance the Manciple's portrait that has no similes shares with the Monk's the "mock-rhetorical" question, the question whose rhetorically compelled answer is not only wrong but mocks the kind of life that suggests it.

> Now is nat that of God a ful fair grace
> That swich a lewed mannes wit shal pace
> The wisdom of an hepe of lerned men? (A575)

The *heap* of lerned men even imitates the Manciple's contempt for the kind of learning his more than thirty "maistres" have, impractical, out of its element in his world of victuals. At the same time he distinguishes the twelve he can boast of to other underlings, great men in the kingdom, yet part of the "heap" he can dupe:

> And yet this Manciple sette hir aller cappe (A585)

This association of the mock rhetorical question with the Pilgrim's tone of voice occurs even more markedly in the Monk's portrait. With the Manciple, apart from the "hepe" with its contempt, only the insistence on the skills of the "duszeyne", continuing beyond reason, usurping in fact half the portrait, suggests finally that we are in contact with his habits of thought, perhaps even listening to this furtive little man.

There can be no doubt with the Monk. His domineering voice establishes itself before the mock-rhetorical questions:

> He yaf nat of that text a pulled hen,
> That seith that hunters ben nat hooly men,
> Ne that a monk, whan he is recchelees,
> Is likned til a fissh that is waterlees, -
> That is to seyn, a monk out of his cloystre.
> But thilke text heeld he nat worth an oystre. (A.182)

The questions themselves have the same aggressive tone mockingly picked up by the narrator in a putative dialogue, the Monk's rationalized self-justifications reduced to absurdity:

> And I seyde his opinion was good.
> What sholde he studie and make hymselven wood,
> Upon a book in cloistre alwey to poure,
> Or swynken with his handes, and laboure
> As Austyn bit? How shal the world be served?
> Lat Austyn have his swynk to hym reserved! (A188)

The rhetoric implies a negative and a positive answer to the two

questions. Reason compels a reversal - the Monk should and the world shouldn't.

Whether we believe that such a conversation could actually have taken place without alerting the Monk, we can hardly see the narrator as unaware of the mockery in his questions.[16] The details all too clearly point up the Monk's anti-monasticism, the conversion of the cloister to the secular good life. In the overt approval of the Monk - as in the later one of the Friar

Ther nas no man nowher so virtuous (A251)

- Chaucer is giving an extreme demonstration of the way value words acquire meaning from context. Good and virtuous not only mean their opposites. They expose much more effectively than condemnation the moral squalor and the burden it entails. The Friar's efforts at self-justification, insinuating and seductive, the Summoner's mouthing of Latin and the lame joke with which he reassured "good felawes" in his vapid tavern society, the Pardoner's extravagant hawking of his relics, and the Parson's outspoken firmness with himself and others, culminate what had been developing throughout the series, the extent to which the particulars presented as constituting the pilgrim's life establish the moral level rather than any overt judgment.[17] Only once does Chaucer resort to direct criticism; his giving the lie to the Summoner collapses, it regresses from what appears to be the spiritual death of excommunication to the mere power of the church to issue writs of imprisonment, the very power that gives the Summoner influence over the "yonge girles of the diocise".

The mock rhetorical question, the voice of the pilgrim, the moral comedy of praise for scoundrels, put emphasis on the narrator's communication with the audience. They alert us to the indirections, to the many different ways we receive information and to the responsibility we have to catch nuances and do the evaluation ourselves. They culminate what had begun with the *a*-ness of the Knight, with the reversal of expectations in the *notatio* preceding the *effictio*, with the avoidance of a predictable pattern in each of the portraits. Chaucer keeps addressing us directly and assuming a sophistication on our part capable of handling ambiguity and indirection.

The poet, as reader of his own verses, was accustomed to performance before an audience. As a poet, he was in part entertainer, in part teacher, in part autobiographer; he was a different "person" from when he served the king as diplomat in France or when he kept the books as Controller of Customs. The fiction he adopted in the *Canterbury Tales* permitted him a richer range of styles than even the *Parlement of Fowles*. There the birds were representative of their kinds and limited to a brief, undemanding appearance. Here he kept discovering new ways of exploiting the fiction. Robert Payne saw the stylistics of some of the tales as showing Chaucer's poetry "at its most determinedly experimental".[17] The *descriptiones* in the Prologue were from the beginning experimental. In no way were they more so than in the doubly complex relationships between Chaucer and the pilgrims he claimed to have observed and between

Chaucer and the audience he envisaged at one point as turning the pages and choosing what to read. The enfranchisement of all three - of the characters in his fiction whom he could describe and even mock but not control, of himself as poet with the possibilities for experiment in style and genre wider than in any other poem he had written, of the audience whom he forced, especially in the Prologue, into a kind of creative collaboration - this treble enfranchisement contributes to the sense of something fresh and unprecedented in his art.

A comparison of the Knight's and the Parson's portraits - defenders of the faith in their very different realms - will point up some of the ways the portraits developed as Chaucer wrote. The Knight's uses the word "worthy" as chief thematic note, depends for its substance on the list of battles, extends the meaning of worthiness with the ambiguous complexity of *wys* and with the one image, "as meeke as is a mayde", in the *descriptio*; it paradoxically confirms the adjectives "verray, parfit, gentil", in the "bismotering" of the Knight's clothing. It is a sober portrait for a sober man. Equally sober, the Parson receives a far richer verbal encomium. The portrait as a whole imitates the character it describes in its proportions of "thought" and "work", its general claims and the validating particulars - "swich he was ypreeved ofte sithes". It moves slowly from the poverty-richness antithesis through the cursing-for-tithes-giving-of-his-own-substance antithesis to the "wroghte-taughte" one. Here it picks up two metaphor-clusters, gold-iron-rust and shepherd-flock-wolf, the only two in the whole Prologue. At the same time we hear the voice of the pilgrim:

> Out of the gospel he tho wordes caughte,
> And this figure he added eek thereto,
> That if gold ruste, what shal iren do?
> For if a preest be foul, on whom we truste,
> No wonder is a lewed man to ruste;
> And shame it is, if a preest tak keep,
> A shiten shepherd and a clene shepe. (A504)

In this passage the verbal elaboration of the portrait and indeed of the Prologue reaches a climax. The mingling of metaphor and antithesis paradoxically gains strength by being represented as the words of a plain-spoken parson who "snibs" high and low, eschews a "spiced" conscience, and makes no demands of others he doesn't first make of himself. In his experiment with the *descriptio* Chaucer has found what is essential to his form of it. He is now willing to give himself more leeway with language.

The Parson's portrait stands out in another way. It is straight-forward; there is little indirection. The absence of moral shortcomings in both Knight and Parson eliminates one area that in other portraits affords rich opportunity for irony. The fact that we see him and hear him though *effictio* is entirely absent testifies to the detailed validation of the claims made for him. Implications about other priests not only occur in the negative superlative, "A bettre preest I trowe that nowher noon ys" (A524). We even get a negative image developed beyond any other in the Prologue of the

priest who abandons his flock for a life of ease in London, (A507-511). The greatest indirection, however, occurs from the relationship with other portraits. The Parson has a brother the Plowman, whose character matches his own. The blood relationship reinforces the image we get of life at the village level. The two men are presented as collaborating in carrying out the gospel message, the Plowman as helpful on the material level as the Parson is on the spiritual, both ready to face hardship, neither seen as squeamish about moral or physical "dung". Their relationship perhaps suggested the only other blood kinship in the Prologue, that between the Knight and his son the Squire. That the most far-ranging of the pilgrims and the least should be shown as making the most meaningful journeys, the one on horseback on the frontiers of Christendom, the other on foot to the "ferreste" in his parish, underlines their importance to family, to community, to England, to Christendom. The parody of the Parson-Ploughman brotherhood in the "friendship" of Summoner and Pardoner cannot but weaken, to the point of severe satire, the picture we get of society. If the portraits of the churls and of the Monk and the Friar resulted from a change in plan, they must also reflect a change in Chaucer's evaluation of the world he lived in.

The metaphor-clusters in the Parson's portrait point up the extent to which each portrait has its own form. The order, the proportions, the use of language, the resonance are unpredictable.[19] "Al the condicioun of ech of hem" turns out in the case of the five guildsmen to be a shared *descriptio* which spends the last five of its eighteen lines on their indistinguishable spouses. The word "shaply" that deflates the wisdom of the five also concludes the vignette of the "deys" in a yeldehalle filled with the seated figures of these substantial men. It suggests the qualifications for leadership in guild or town. A similarly deflating word, this time in rhyme-position, lets the air out of the Prioress's conscience, as "charitable", "pitous" and "wepe" find ironic fulfillment in the "mous/Kaught in a trappe". Other strikingly resonant words bring to their contexts unique impact. "Pynche" and "infect" in the Man of Law's portrait, for instance, appear in negative constructions, but they characterize the sterile possessiveness of his attitude to property. They protect his land-purchasing and define his meagre humanity. "Snewed" in the Franklin's portrait has the opposite effect. It conveys in a single word his openhanded sharing, his generous use of his property. "Droupe" as a negative image for the Yeoman's arrows, "sweete" for the taste of the Friar's lisp, "shake" to describe what tempests do to the Shipman's beard, "haunt" for the Wife's skill in weaving, and "nosethirles" for the black wide features of the Miller's face have a similar resonance. Occasionally the meaning comes clear only after context has forced the discard of innocent alternatives. The Physician's "esy of dispense", the marriages the Friar made at his own "cost", the "water" over which the Shipman sent his prisoners home have the deceptive shape of praise. Like so many of the details in the portraits they keep the reader, the listener alert, an active contributor to the fictive experience.

The sharply seen detail with moral overtones helps to keep the

portraits manageable in length. The *descriptio* that has *amplificatio* as its purpose in the rhetorical treatises paradoxically finds in *abbreviatio* its proper techniques. Chaucer exploits the meanings possible in the pairing, grouping and placing of pilgrims. The Merchant and the Clerk, the Man of Law and the Franklin have their contrasts sharpened, the first two by the repetition of "sownyng" in describing their manner of speech, the second pair by the "pynch-snewed" opposition in their management of property. The contrasting pair, Knight and Squire, form with the Yeoman, a military group, contrasted with the more numerous religious group that follows. But their blood-kinship also has meaning when seen in connection with the other related pair the Parson and the Plowman, an effect that is sharply qualified, when Chaucer adds portraits for the churls, by the sinister companionship of Summoner and Pardoner. The varied rationale for groupings, feudal, vocational, social, family, even in the case of the churls partly moral, attests to the complexity of the society Chaucer presents in his portraits.

Even more complex than the groupings are the values the pilgrims reflect and aspire to. Each of the values tends to have its own vocabulary - morality: such words as "good", "virtuous", "charitable", "benigne", "hooly", "pacient"; social position: "estatlich", "digne", "noble", "gentil", "reverence", "renoun"; wealth: "moneye", "catel", "gold", "silver", "win", "rich", "encrees"; intelligence: "wys", "war", "studie", "heede", "rekene wel", "logyk", "science", "grounded"; professional competence: the ubiquitous "koude" and the less frequent "knewe" and "wiste", all three often modified by "wel" and even "ful wel", "able", "fair", "parfit"; social propriety: "fetys", "tretys", "curteis", "servysable"; pleasure: "delyt", "felicitee", "lust", "loved"; meticulousness in the care and use of property: "thrifty", "wel dresse", "gay", "sheene", "redy", "fyn", "ful streite", "ful moiste", "wel kepe", "yive rekenynge"; physical strength: "delyvere", "hardy", "myght", "byg of brawn and bones", "stout". Frequently the terms get interchanged and misapplied, the Pardoner as "noble ecclesiaste", the Monk as "fair prelaat", the Friar curteis "ther as profit scholde arise". "Worthy", used five times of the Knight with moral import, characterizes as well four other pilgrims. Given its relative value by context it accentuates the disparities between Knight, Franklin, Wife of Bath, Merchant and Friar. For the two last the irony is almost absolute; yet there is an element of contrast even here: for the Friar the moral value dominates, for the Merchant the monetary:

> This worthy man ful wel his wit bisette:
> Ther wiste no wight that he was in dette . . . (A280)

What they lack in worth distinguishes them.

Of the terms for wealth, gold and silver appear most frequently, gold in six portraits, silver in four.[20] For the Pardoner and the Friar silver means quite simply money. But the Yeoman's Christopher is of silver "sheene", evidence that he kept not just his weapons but everything he owned in mint condition. On the other hand the Guildsmen see in the silver mountings of their knives an important social distinction; they are explicitly not of

brass. The gold brooch the Prioress has attached to her prayer beads calls attention to its motto and brings to a climax the ambivalences of her life and portrait. Its shocking impropriety escaped the awareness so sensitive to the potential drop of food or "ferthyng of grece". The love-knotte in the golden pin that fastens the Monk's hood takes up three lines and adds an extended item to the innuendos more casually dropped of venery, pricking, lust, and hare. Whether we draw the inference of sexual promiscuity or see a sublimation of libidinous energy into the pleasures of hunting and the good life would not greatly concern this "abbotable" man, whose contribution to church government prefigures that of some Renaissance popes.[21]

Gold means money in both the Clerk's portrait and the Physician's. Chaucer's joke on the Clerk's lack of gold, though a philosopher, redounded to the victim's credit rather than the author's. The little that he has he spends on books and on learning. Chaucer makes amends for his joke by unalloyed praise of the Clerk as grateful to his patrons, succinct in speech, a dedicated scholar and a generous teacher. On the other hand Chaucer speciously attributes the Physician's love of gold to its use in physic as a "cordial". The author's humour has this time more effect, following as it does his witty use of "esy" in the already noted phrase "esy of dispense". Chaucer's ease with his *descriptiones* has developed into a delightful three-sided game, played now with a pilgrim, now with the audience. He takes delight in his association with the pilgrims and with us, a delight that makes his art active and vital.

The final two uses of gold are both figurative. The Miller's "thombe of gold" has a proverbial relevance to his thievery and perhaps also a more literal reference to the heavy thumb on the scales. A similar figurative use in the Parson's portrait is not so playful; it depends on the value of the metal and its purity. The Parson sees clerical corruption as strong enough to effect the impossible alchemy of rusting gold. This hyperbolic figure indicates the ideal to which the Parson holds up his own conduct. Evidence of the standards the pilgrims set for themselves increases as the art of portraiture develops. It becomes the severest test of the pilgrims' quality. With the Monk, the Friar, the Manciple, the Summoner and the Pardoner it involves the voice of the pilgrim and, in two instances, as we've seen, the mock rhetorical question. By this time portrait with its suggestions of pose and stasis has become almost a misnomer. We watch the pilgrims move, work, talk. We see them not only in relation to Chaucer, but to each other.[22] The Miller leads the pilgrims out of town with his bagpipe, the Reeve skulks cautiously in the rear, while the Pardoner and the Summoner bawl out their love song in treble and bass. The portraits have turned into impromptu celebrations, into improvisations where the freedom of pilgrims and author invites and challenges the participation of the reader.

NOTES

1 Ralph Baldwin, *The Unity of the Canterbury Tales*, *Anglistica V* (Copenhagen, 1955) pp.35-54. Quotations from Chaucer are from the Robinson second edition (Boston, 1957).

2 *op.cit.*, p.52.

3 Articles and books on the portraits of the *Prologue* are numerous, but most of them deal with thematic material, with historical background, or with the balance between type and individual. Manly, *Some New Light on Chaucer* (New York, 1926), Muriel Bowden, *A Commentary on the Prologue to the Canterbury Tales* (New York, 1948), and Jill Mann, *Chaucer and Medieval Estates Satire* (Cambridge, 1973), are most important for historical background. Arthur W. Hoffman, "Chaucer's Prologue to Pilgrimage: The Two Voices", *ELH* 21 (1954) pp.1-16, has what is perhaps the best single treatment of thematic material. The orthodox position on the balance between type and individual can be found in Donaldson's edition, *Chaucer's Poetry, An Anthology for the Modern Reader* (New York, 1958) pp.875f. Robertson, *Preface to Chaucer* (Princeton, 1962) pp.242-257, finds the portraits all "point toward an abstract reality" and classifies them as "personified abstractions, iconographically described characters, and grotesques". Claus Schaar, *The Golden Mirror* (Lund, 1955), takes up the technique of the portraits in general terms against the background of Chaucer's earlier work, pp.201-212, and again against the background of the literary traditions available to Chaucer, pp.301-333. The most thorough considerations of portrait technique are to be found in Baldwin, *op.cit.*, and Harold F. Brooks, *Chaucer's Pilgrims: The Artistic Order of the Portraits in the Prologue* (London, 1962). See also James Hulbert, "Chaucer's Pilgrims", *PMLA* 64 (1949) pp.823-828; Raymond Preston, *Chaucer* (London, 1952) pp.153-168; E.T. Donaldson, "Chaucer the Pilgrim", *PMLA* 69 (1954) pp.928-36; Edgar Duncan, "Narrator's Points of View in the Portrait-Sketches", *Essays in Honor of Walter Clyde Curry* (Nashville, 1954) pp.77-101; Paull F. Baum, *Chaucer, A Critical Appreciation* (Durham, N.Ca., 1958) pp.63-7; James Winny, *The General Prologue* (Cambridge, 1965); and Owen, *Pilgrimage and Storytelling in the Canterbury Tales* (Norman, Oklahoma, 1977) pp.48-86.

4 The exact number is vexing. Five pilgrims receive a single portrait. It looks as if the three priests and the chaplain were originally named but not described. The list following the Plowman's portrait suggests a similar fate for the five churls and Chaucer. If the number of pilgrims including Chaucer held steady at 29, the numbers I've used would represent first the lack of all of these portraits, second the lack of the religious group, and third the difference caused by the guildsmen sharing a portrait. See "The Twenty-nine Pilgrims and the Three Pirests", *MLN* 76 (1961) pp.224-30.

5 See Edmond Faral, *Les Arts Poétiques du XIIe et du XIIIe Siècle* (Paris, 1958) pp.77f. Cicero, *De inventione*, I XXIV; Horace *Ars Poetica*, ll.114-27, 153-78; Matthew of Vendome, *Ars Versificatoria*, I, ll.77-8.

6 Edmond Faral, *op.cit.*, pp.78,79; Horace *Ars Poetica*, ll.129-31; Matthew, *Ars Versificatoria*, I, l.78.

7 See Owen, *MLN* 76 (1961) pp.224-30.

8 See Faral, *op.cit.*, pp.79ff, for the medieval practice. For a similar comment on Chaucer's technique, see Baldwin, *op.cit.*, p.48. I would take exception to the word "inorganic" which Baldwin uses to characterize the Chaucerian *descriptio*. Where "disordered" (another of the words in Baldwin), the portrait in the Prologue has implications for either the

character being described or the quality of the observation. Many of the portraits are well-ordered, none of them in the prescribed way.

9 A term I think I've invented to cover expressions like "no man ferre" A48 and "ther nas no man nowher so virtuous" A251. The former is not technically a superlative, since what it says is that the Knight had ridden as far as the furthest.

10 I tried testing the incidence of variation in the portraits and in other passages of Chaucer's poetry, by comparing the number of times subject - verb - (complement) word order occurs as against variations from this norm (for questions of course the norm is auxiliary-subject-verb). The ratio for the portraits varied extremely, but in no meaningful way that I could discover. For instance, the ratio for the Summoner was 25 : 23, for the Pardoner 32 : 19. For the Knight it was 16 : 13, for the Squire 13 : 13, for the Yeoman 7 : 9. The Prioress was 25 : 17, the Clerk 8 : 16. The first eighteen lines of the *Prologue* perhaps reflected the higher style in the ratio 4 : 9. *The Miller's Tale*, the first 50 lines, A 3187 - 3236, was 30 : 16. On the whole straight narrative seemed to favour the regular pattern.

11 For *collatio occulta*, see Geoffrey of Vinsauf, *Poetria Nova*, ll.240-63, Faral, *op.cit.*, p.204f; discussed by Faral, p.69. For a somewhat different treatment of this line, see my *Pilgrimage and Storytelling*, p.53. The footnote, 5, on p.225, gives references for the meaning of "worthy" and "wys".

12 See Baldwin, *op.cit.*, pp.38, 39, 49, for a reiteration of this idea. The Yeoman, the Prioress, the Merchant, the Cook, and the Manciple are hardly "non-pareils". The five guildsmen described in a single portrait reduce the idea to absurdity. It originated with Kittredge, *Chaucer and his Poetry* (Cambridge, Mass., 1915), and was picked up, *inter alia* by Malone, *Chapters on Chaucer* (Baltimore, 1951).

13 Manly, *Some New Light on Chaucer*, pp.104ff, Bowden, *A Commentary*, pp.66f.

14 See Owen, *Pilgrimage and Storytelling* and, for the early manuscripts and the state of the text, "The Alternative Reading of *The Canterbury Tales*", *PMLA* 97 (1982) pp.237-50.

15 Baldwin, *op.cit.*, p.53, discusses the similes and finds "most of them affixed to the churls or disreputables". He sees these similes as different from the "stock similes which had been the mainstay of the romance . . . not so much less class conscious as less stilted". The Squire and the Monk do not fit Baldwin's explanation. Baldwin also comments on the portrait of Alysoun in the *Miller's Tale*. Schaar, *op.cit.*, pp.259ff, under the heading "Rhetoric", discusses the similes in the portraits, comparing them with those in earlier works by Chaucer where they have "a solemn, elevated, and lyrical character". He finds them used in the *Canterbury Tales* "to convey an impression of great physical strength or magnificence of appearance or array; or else of bucolic charm or sweetness". He does not distinguish between Prologue and tales, nor does he notice the difference in incidence between some portraits in the Prologue and others.

16 See Donaldson, "Chaucer the Pilgrim", *PMLA* 69 (1954) pp.928-36.

17 For more detailed discussion of these examples, see Owen. *Pilgrimage and Storytelling*, pp.57, 60ff, 74, 81, 83.

18 *The Key of Remembrance* (New Haven, 1963) p.170.

19 Baldwin, *op.cit.*, pp.51f, comments on the "discontinuity and incongruity of detail" as Chaucer's stock in trade. He speaks of "his technique of suggestiveness and contrapuntal detail". These last terms give emphasis to the purpose of Chaucer's avoidance of system, of the order that frequently subsumes apparent disorder.

20 Ann S. Haskell, "The Golden Ambiguity of the *Canterbury Tales*, *The Erasmus Review* I (1971) pp.1-9, discusses the linking of *amor* and gold in an "extended pun" throughout the *Canterbury Tales*. She discusses all the gold references in the Prologue except for the one in the Clerk's portrait.

21 For the argument in favour of drawing the inference, see Edmund Reiss, "The Symbolic Surface of the *Canterbury Tales*; The Monk's Portrait", *Chaucer Review* 2 (1968) pp.254-72, 3 (1968) pp.12-28.

22 Beyond the Prologue three of the last portraits have the closest association with the pilgrims' performance, the Pardoner's with his Prologue and Tale, the Friar's and the Summoner's with each other's tales.

THE RHYMED OFFICE FOR ST THOMAS OF LANCASTER: POETRY, POLITICS AND LITURGY IN FOURTEENTH-CENTURY ENGLAND

By CHRISTOPHER PAGE

The kings and magnates of medieval England knew how to exploit - and how to suppress - the influences of topical songs, and many medieval English chronicles contain scraps of verse that quicken as we read the violent narratives that enfold them. Yet hardly any topical poetry - either within the chronicles or elsewhere - is preserved with the music that may often have added its own quality of wit to satire and of zest to eulogy.[1] Some of the surviving verse must have been sung; Langtoft relates that one of the English topical rhymes embedded in his *Chronicle* was *chaunté* by the Scots; two poems on the death of Piers Gaveston in a fifteenth century manuscript at Cambridge are contrafacta of hymns by Fortunatus whose melodies they are presumably intended to share.[2] Yet this is a small body of material with which to explore the kind of questions we wish to ask: how were the associations of pre-existent melodies harnessed to new political causes? How complex was the meaning that such songs could generate? What kinds of subject matter attracted this form of creation? What techniques can we use to recover tunes for poems preserved without music? We need more material to investigate these issues and fortunately more is now at hand: an office for "St" Thomas of Lancaster (d 1322) in British Library MS Royal 12 C. xii.[3] The poems of this office are preserved without music (see plate 1) but the melodies can be recovered in all save two cases; the search reveals how a poet (or poets, the distinction matters little here) exploited the liturgy for a purpose in which propaganda and hagiography were inextricably mixed, turning old melodies saturated with liturgical meaning to the service of a controversial new cult.

One of the most dramatic events in the devotional life of medieval England took place on 22 March, 1322, when Thomas earl of Lancaster was led from his own hall at Pontefract and beheaded for his part in the armed baronial opposition to Edward II:[4]

> Þo sette þai oppon his heued in scorn an olde chapelet, al-to rent and torn, þat was nouȝt worþ an halpeny; and after þai sette him oppon a lene white palfray, ful vnsemeliche and ek al bare, wiþ an olde bridel; and wiþ an horrible noyse þai drow him out of þe castel toward his deþ, and caste on him meny balles of snowe . . anone a ribaude went to him, and smote of his heuede . . . Allas þat euer soche a gentil blode shulde ben don to deþ with-outen cause and resoun!

The execution was possibly illegal; it was definitely a mistake.[5] Edward consented that Thomas should be buried by the monks of St John's priory at Pontefract and almost immediately a cult developed centering upon the tomb near the main altar.[6] This devotion certainly had a political element - prayer and pilgrimage masked protest - yet the emblematising drive of medieval devotion to the saints must soon have turned the Thomas of 1322 into an image, eroding the pragmatism of the cult.[7] Many pilgrims may have recognised that Thomas's claim to sainthood lay as much in his kin as in his conduct; it was royal blood that was spilled at Pontefract: *Vas regale trucidatur*, says Thomas' Office, *regni pro remedio*, and royalty enjoyed a privileged relationship with the king of Heaven.[8] On Earth, nobility of blood allied to greatness of station and honour were a "grand spur to love amongst the laity" as the author of the *Vita Beati Thome Comitis Lancastrie* affirms.[9] The pilgrims flocked to Pontefract and news of the cult was carried to Edward at the York parliament of 1322; his investigators found "the whole country" testifying to the miracles according to one pro-Lancastrian continuator of the *Brut* Chronicle.[10] Edward commanded the priory doors to be closed but the cult broke out at St Paul's in London where there was a plaque which Lancaster had put up to commemorate Edward's affirmation of the Ordinances.[11] Miraculous cures were effected in the building and on 28 June, 1323, Edward wrote to bishop Stephen of London about this "certain plaque . . . on which there are likenesses, images or diverse pictures including, amongst others, a figure of Thomas, formerly earl of Lancaster", emphasising that the miracles were a "diabolic deception" and the cult *absque auctoritate ecclesie Romane*.[12] He had the plaque removed but we do not need the testimony of the *Cronique de London* to surmise that this did little to weaken Lancaster's hold over the people's minds.[13] It seems that many other commemorative objects existed in private hands - plaques showing scenes from his life, bowls engraved with his image - that Edward could not suppress and the moment he fell there ceased to be anything subversive about them. The official status of Thomas's cult changed at once. A matter of days after Edward's deposition Henry of Lancaster wrote to the Archbishop of York, William Melton, seeking the establishment of a commission to investigate Thomas's miracles; Melton duly wrote to the Holy See testifying to the importance he attached to the question.[14]

Thomas's cult inspired poetry as well as piety; no doubt poets with Lancastrian sympathies were quick to see the potential of events at Pontefract and London. The remains of what must have been a large quantity of Latin verse in Thomas's honour are scattered here and there, some of it unpublished like the following stanzas - a fragment, perhaps, from a liturgical Office:[15]

> Thomas de Lancastria comes commendatus,
> Miles ex malicia morti iudicatus,
> I[u]stus pro iusticia fuit decollatus,
> F[u]it mors mesticia cuncti comitatus.

Ab etate tenera devotus degebat,
Pietatis viscera pauperi pandebat,
Miserorum misera pondera pollebat,
Vir verax, vera, varia virtute verebat.

The most extensive series of poems in Lancaster's praise appears in a manuscript dating from the first half of the fourteenth century: British Library MS Royal 12 C. xii. The legends which accompany three of the poems - *Antiphona*, *Prosa* and *Sequentia* - suggest that we are dealing with texts intended for liturgical use. There are no melodies but the poems encode a secret: the incipits refer the singer to chants he already knows.

The poem *Pange lingua gloriosi comitis martirium* (Appendix 5) provides a clear example. The incipit points us to Fortunatus's famous hymn *Pange lingua gloriosi proelium certaminis* for Easter; we think at once - as we are surely intended to do - of Lancaster's execution in the liturgical time of Quadragesima, *ante Passionem*.[16] Fortunatus's hymn celebrates Christ's battle with his adversary, the Devil, and thus the liturgical associations of the melody nourish the hagiographer's effort. He makes much of his model poem, copying not only the syllable-count and verse-form but also internal pieces of text which he either borrows or echoes:[17]

	FORTUNATUS
Pange lingua gloriosi / comitis . . .	*Pange lingua gloriosi* proelium
De parentis utriusque . . .	*De parentis* protoplasti
Dux fidelis suum gregem . . .	*Crux fidelis* inter omnes

These relationships are clearly not accidental. The metrical and formal identity, graced by verbal affinity then carried to a sub-verbal level of perception - and persuasion - by the melody, establishes an implicit comparison between Thomas and Christ (at one point the author is almost explicit: Lancaster becomes a "victor on the third day in line 11).[18] The aim of the poem is to glorify and emblematise Thomas in a way that is endorsed by historical reference; he becomes an image of the "pious earl" and the "royal flower of knights" amongst the characters and scenes of his earthly drama. The framework is almost chronological, each stanza embodying a critical moment in a static grasp that resists narrative. The real world is close at hand; the name of Lancaster's betrayer, pointed by the musical logic, lingers between stanzas:

. . . . . .
dum dolose defraudatur
per sudam Hoylandie. (Appendix 5, stanza 5)

The search for more "liturgical meaning" in Lancaster's Office is rewarded. *Copiose caritatis* (Appendix 7) proves to be a contrafactum of an antiphon for St Nicholas, while *Sospitati dat egrotos* (Appendix 3) is based upon a prosa for the same saint interpolated into the ninth respond at Matins.[19] This poem attempts a systematic exploitation of its model:[20]

Nicholas	*Sospitati dedit egros* olei perfusio
Thomas	*Sospitati dat egrotos* precum Thome *fusio*
Nicholas	Nicholaus naufrag*antum affuit presidio*
Thomas	Comes pius mox lang*uentum adest in presidio*

There are several reasons why our poet should have wanted to link Thomas with St Nicholas. The celebration of miraculous healing *ex eius tumba* forms an important element in the liturgy for Nicholas and few personal names were more appropriate to Thomas than that of this saint; John Myrk interprets it as "praysyng of þe pepull" and there are related etymologies in the *Legenda Aurea*, including *victor populi*.[21]

So far we have seen our poet at work with well-known materials but the solution to two further puzzles - the music of *Summum regem honoremus* (Appendix 4) and *O iam Christi pietas* (Appendix 6) reveals him at work with more recondite sources that throw much light on Lancaster's office and the circumstances in which it was composed. The answer suggested itself to me when I noticed the following stanza in a sequence contained in University College Oxford MS 78a, a missal according to the use of Hereford:[22]

O miranda sanctitas
per quam [Christi] pietas
sic mundo profecit;
nam mutus et cecitas,
gutta, claudus, surditas
et gibbus defecit.

Lancaster's poem begins:

O iam Christi pietas
atque Thome caritas
palam elucessit.
Heu! nunc languet equitas
viget et impietas,
veritas vilessit.

The schemes of metre and rhyme are the same (this is a close relative of the Middle English tail-rhyme stanza) and the rhymes are identical. There is the shared clause *Christi pietas* (where *Christi* can be confidently restored to the imperfect text of the first poem on the authority of a reading in an early-sixteenth century printed Hereford Breviary).[23] If this stanza was the model for our poem then its subject matter is exactly what is required for it relates the miracles of St Thomas of Hereford.

Important details now fall into place. It is established that the scribe who copied our Office was the main scribe of the celebrated miscellany, British Library MS Harley 2253; he appears to have been active in Ludlow.[24] A little searching with this provenance in mind reveals that the poem for Lancaster entitled *Summum regem honoremus* (Appendix 4) is a contrafactum of *Summi regis in honore*, a sequence which exists (with varying content but with the same incipit and form) in three versions: one for St Thomas of Hereford, one for St

Ethelbert of Hereford and one for the Virgin (to whom, together with St Ethelbert, Hereford cathedral is jointly dedicated).[25] When clerics familiar with the use of Hereford sang Lancaster's piece a wealth of liturgical meaning would be released and channelled into the new cult; Thomas would be implicitly compared with St Ethelbert, a martyr of royal blood said to have been murdered by a king - the parallels would assuredly not be seen as accidental; he would also be assimilated to his namesake, Thomas of Hereford, canonised in 1320 or only two years before Lancaster's execution. Thomas of Hereford had been Simon de Montfort's chancellor - a fact hardly likely to be forgotten at a time when Lancaster was apt to be compared with Simon.[26] Yet there may be a closer link between the two men. The anonymous author of the *Vita Beati Thome Comitis Lancastrie* relates that it was Thomas of Hereford who baptised Lancaster; he even claims that the bishop made a prophetic speech during the ceremony about Lancaster's destiny, capitalising upon the traditional symbolic relationship between baptiser and baptised by claiming Lancaster as his *filius spiritualis*.[27] We cannot assess the truth of these stories as no other source deals with Lancaster's youth;[28] perhaps it was fabricated by a pro-Lancastrian author who, like the compiler of our office, wished to establish and then to exploit a link between Lancaster and the renowned bishop of Hereford only recently canonised.

Where might this have happened? The evidence points strongly to the diocese of Hereford. The three sequences beginning *Summi regis in honore* do not appear, as far as I am aware, outside of books conforming to the use of Hereford. Certainly our copy of Lancaster's office, which exploits these sequences, seems to come from the Herefordshire-Shropshire area. It was doubtless copied by someone who recognised the peculiarly localised liturgical meaning it was trying to exploit. There were numerous clerics in the dioceses of Hereford and Worcester pursued after 1322 for their pro-baronial sympathies;[29] our poet could well have been such a man, perhaps one wishing to make an impression on Adam of Orleton, bishop of Hereford until 1327, whose household was not without a pro-baonial element and who, arraigned in 1324 for not following the king north in the campaign which led to Lancaster's death, conceived an *inexorabile odium contra regem et eius amicos* according to the chronicler le Baker.[30]

How were these pieces used? We do not know for certain that they were ever performed liturgically - or, indeed, that they were ever performed at all. It was quite in order for poets to write Offices for "saints" before they were officially canonised but it does not follow that it was always permissible to sing them.[31] Yet we do possess a fifteenth century polyphonic setting of a text in honour of Thomas and it must seem unlikely that such a piece would have been composed without the prospect of a performance.[32] As far as the years after Edward's deposition are concerned liturgical performance remains a possibility for our office. But it is also possible that they were intended for use as political songs. We remember that two Latin poems on the death of Gaveston survive (one praises Thomas in its first line) which are contrafacta of hymns by Fortunatus including *Pange lingua gloriosi proelium certaminis*;

these topical poems were certainly not intended for liturgical use. The idea of hymn-melodies torn from their liturgical setting and set adrift in a world of domestic and public performance need not surprise us; John Stevens pointed out long ago that some plainsong hymns had currency as popular songs in later-medieval England.[33]

We have some evidence that Lancaster's downfall caused a stir amongst singers. In 1323 Edward II made a progress to the north that brought him to Pickering in August. Whilst there he took seisin of Thomas's confiscated manors. He then proceeded to Whorlton castle•where two women, perhaps minstrels, named Alianore le Rede and Alice de Whorlton sang songs of Simon de Montfort for which they were subsequently paid three shillings.[34] It seems almost inconceivable that Edward, finding himself in the north only a year after Boroughbridge, would relax with stories of this great rebel to whom Lancaster was often compared. It seems more likely that the songs, clearly circulating in the area, were such that Edward would wish to hear to sense the temper of the region. Perhaps some popular feeling and lore about Thomas was finding expression? There was certainly more such feeling in the halls and refectories of Herefordshire clerics where our songs may have been delivered.[35]

NOTES

1 Two familiar instances of the influence of song are: Roger of Hoveden's story of the (French) *cantores et joculatores* hired to sing the praises of Richard I (*Chronica Rogeri de Hoveden*, Rolls Series 51, III, p.143), and the story of Lucas de Barre, blinded by Henry I for his songs, told by Orderic Vitalis (*The Ecclesiastical History of Orderic Vitalis*, ed. M. Chibnall, 6 vols. (Oxford, 1972-80) VI, pp.352-5). As far as I am aware no political poetry appears with music in any medieval English chronicle source, although it is interesting to find one Latin topical song, *Vulneratur karitas*, laid out for music (which was never supplied) in British Library MS Harley 746, ff.103v-4, a miscellany of legal and documentary materials. A later reader (?s.xiv) has scribbled the opening words of the poem and some musical notes on f.107.

2 *The Chronicle of Pierre de Langtoft* (RS 47) II, p.234; the songs on the death of Gaveston, *Vexilla regni prodeunt* and *Pange lingua necem Petri* are preserved in Cambridge, Trinity College MS O. 9. 38, f.64r/v. They have been printed (without music) by T. Wright, *The Political Songs of England*, Camden Society 6 (London, 1839) pp.258-61. I have edited the poems with their music for a forthcoming edition to be published by Antico Editions.

3 The text of this office is printed in Wright, *Political Songs*, pp.268-72. For a description of this manuscript and an inventory of its contents see G. Warner and J.B. Gilson, *Catalogue of Western Manuscripts in the Old Royal and King's Collections in the British Museum*, 5 vols. (London, 1921) II, pp.26-9. The office is also printed in W. Sparrow Simpson, *Documents illustrating the History of St Paul's Cathedral*, Camden Society n.s. 26 (1880) pp.12-14. I have resisted Sparrow Simpson's emendation of the MS *sudam Hoylandie* (in *Pange lingua gloriosi comitis martirium*, Appendix 5) to *Judam Hoylandie* which I do not find entirely convincing, even though I have no explanation to offer for the mysterious *sudam*.

4 *The Brut*, ed. F.W.D. Brie, EETS OS 131 and 136 (1906 and 1908) I, p.223. For an account of the circumstances leading up to this event see J.R. Maddicott, *Thomas of Lancaster, 1307-1322: A Study in the Reign of Edward II* (Oxford, 1970). As the dates in his title reveal, Maddicott is not concerned with the development of Thomas's cult in his book (although it is briefly discussed on pp.329-30); most of the studies of the subject date from the nineteenth century. They include Lord Houghton, "Observations on the History of Thomas, Earl of Lancaster", *Journal of the British Archaeological Association*, 20 (1864) pp.16-18; Richard Holmes, *Pontefract* (Pontefract, 1878) pp.152f; Alex D.H. Leadman, "The Battle of Boroughbridge", *Yorkshire Archaeological and Topographical Journal* 7 (1881-2) pp.330-60. See also H. Tait, "Pilgrim-signs and Thomas, Earl of Lancaster", *The British Museum Quarterly* 19 (1954) pp.39-46.

5 The judgement against Thomas was annulled in the first parliament of Edward III (*Rotuli Parliamentorum*, II, pp.3-5, where Henry of Lancaster claims that his brother *noun resonablement estoit jugge a la morte par un proces erroyne contre lui adonques fait*). See M.H. Keen, "Treason Trials under the Law of Arms", *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 5th Series, 12 (1962) p.102.

6 Various chronicles mention the location of the tomb (e.g. *Flores Historiarum*, RS 95, III, p.206) but it had not been traced when C.V. Bellamy's excavation report was published ("Pontefract Priory Excavations 1957-61", *Thoresby Society* 49 (1962-4)). Janet Walker informs me, on the basis of her examination of the late C.V. Bellamy's as yet unpublished notes, and following consultation with the members of the excavation group, that there is no evidence to connect any of the burials excavated

in the priory church with the tomb of Thomas of Lancaster.

7 The cult lasted well into the fifteenth century - and indeed until the Reformation - when its political impetus must have been spent. There is, for example, a rubricated obit for *Sancti thome martiris comitis Lancastrie* in the calendar of a fifteenth century Missal from St John's, Pontefract, now Cambridge, King's College MS 31 (the entry covers two lines for 22 and 23 March). There was a guild of St Thomas in Pontefract at this time dedicated to preserving and improving commemorative sites and monuments. Miracles continued well into the century. Blood flowed from Thomas's tomb in 1466 (as it had done in 1359) according to an *Abbreviata Chronica* (ed. J.J. Smith in *Cambridge Antiquarian Society Publications* 1 (1840-6) p.10); this event is said to have caused *maxima fama* in England and allusion is made to other miracles of *beatus Thomas* (*loc.cit.*). Relics were still kept in the fifteenth century. See Alexandra F. Johnston and Margaret Rogerson, *Records of Early English Drama: York*, 2 vols. (Toronto, 1979) II, pp.637 and 858-9.

8 This is the most complex issue surrounding Lancaster's cult and one that must be studied by a qualified historian. It does not bear directly upon the issues raised here.

9 *Anecdota ex codicibus hagiographicis Johannis Gielemans* (Brussels, 1895) p.94. This *Vita* is preserved in a manuscript now Vienna Nationalbibliothek Ser. nov. 12708; there it is divided into nine sections and it is just possible that this ninefold division is connected with the readings of Matins.

10 V.H. Galbraith, "Extracts from the Historia Aurea and a French 'Brut', (1317-47)", *English Historical Review* 43 (1928) p.216. Very few of Lancaster's miracles are documented. Some are listed in the *Vita* (pp.98f) and several in the *Brut*. A passage in the *Flores Historiarum*, III, p.214, promises a separate treatment of Lancaster's miracles in another work. I have found no evidence that this was ever undertaken.

11 *Croniques de London*, ed. G.J. Aungier, Camden Society 28 (1844) p.46. This same chronicle reports that the plaque was later replaced.

12 *Foedera*, II, part 1, p.525. According to the *Cronique de London* Edward had the *tabula* and the accompanying wax images removed on the feast of the translation of St Thomas of Canterbury, Lancaster's celebrated namesake with whom he was sometimes compared (as in the first poem of our office, Appendix 1). The *Flores Historiarum*, III, pp.213f, confirms that the plaque contained an image of Thomas in armour. For a painting of a *vir armatus*, probably Thomas, see Bodleian Library MS Douce 231, f.1.

13 *Cronique de London*, p.46.

14 Both Letters are printed in *Historical Papers and Letters from the Northern Registers*, ed. J. Raine (RS 61) pp.339-42. The modern MS reference and foliation is: York, Borthwick Institute Reg. 9A, ff.205v-6. Lancaster was never actually canonised, despite the assertion to the contrary in Walsingham, *Historia Anglicana* (RS 28) II, p.195.

15 MS e Mus. 139, f.85r. I have omitted: a hypermetric *cuius* in line 4; a redundant compendium (?*pra*) before *pondera* in line 7. Line 8 as it stands has one syllable too many; perhaps it should read *Homo verax, varia virtute verebat*. *Homo* might easily have been changed to *vir* by a scribe over-zealous for alliteration and word-play.

For other "liturgical" material in honour of Lancaster see the note by T. Taylor and J.T. Micklethwaite in *Archaeological Journal* 36 (1879)

pp.103-4, which incorporates material from a fourteenth-century English Book of Hours now Baltimore, Walters Art Gallery MS W.105, f.13v (compare Cambridge, Clare College MS 6, f.144). For *Ave Thoma, gemma milicie* and *Miles Christi gloriose* from Cologne, Historisches Archiv der Stadt Cod. W.28, ff.84v and 146r, see *Analecta Hymnica*, 13, p.7, and 28, p.321. For a fifteenth century English polyphonic setting of the latter see *Fifteenth Century Liturgical Music*, ed. Andrew Hughes, Early English Church Music 8 (London, 1964) pp.10-11.

16 *Adae Murimuth Continuatio Chronicarum* (RS 93) p.36 and p.280.

17 Fortunatus's poem is quoted from MGH *Auctorum Antiquissimorum* IV, part 1 (Berlin, 1881) pp.27-8.

18 *Agonista fit invictus/statim die tercia.* An association between Thomas and Christ seems to linger in a passage of the *Flores Historiarum*, III, p.206, where Lancaster, led to execution, *non contendit neque clamavit* (*cf.* Matthew xii 19).

19 The texts of the ninth respond and its verse could scarcely be more appropriate: R *Ex eius tumba marmorea sacrum resudat oleum quo liniti sanantur ceci , surdis auditus redditur et debilis quisque sospes regreditur.* V *Cateruatim ruunt populi cernere cupientes que per eum fiunt mirabilia.* Our author clearly capitalises not only upon the liturgical meaning of the prosa but also of its context.

20 Here is the full text, transcribed from the Hereford Antiphoner (Hereford Cathedral Library MS P. 9. vii, f.229v; for the choice of source see below): Sospitati dedit egros olei perfusio / Nicholaus naufragantum affuit presidio / Releuauit a defunctis defunctum in biuio / Baptizatur auri uiso iudeus inditio / Uas in mari mersum patri redditur cum filio / O quam probat sanctum Dei farris augmentacio / Ergo laudes Nicholao concinat hec concio / Nam qui corde poscit illum propulsato uicio / Sospes regreditur.

21 *Mirk's Festial*, ed. T. Erbe, EETS ES 96 (1905) p.11, and *Jacobi a Voragine Legenda Aurea*, ed. Th. Graesse (Leipzig, 1850) p.22.

22 F.188r. This is part of the sequence *Magne lucem caritatis* for St Thomas of Hereford (text in *Analecta Hymnica*, 40, p.302); unfortunately there seems to be no copy of this sequence in existence with music. For details of this manuscript see S.J.P. van Dijk, "Handlist of the Latin Liturgical Manuscripts in the Bodleian Library Oxford", 1 (1957) p.150 (typescript handlist), where the MS is said to be from St Dubricius', Whitchurch (Monmouthshire).

23 See the text in *Analecta Hymnica*, *loc.cit.*

24 Carter Revard, "Three more Holographs in the Hand of the Scribe of MS Harley 2253 in Shrewsbury", *Notes and Queries*, n.s. 28 (1981) pp.199-200. The scribe is known to have been active in the period 1314-49.

25 The texts for Ethelbert and Thomas of Hereford are in *The Hereford Breviary*, ed. W.H. Frere and L.E.G. Brown, 3 vols., Henry Bradshaw Society (London, 1903, 1910 and 1915) II, pp.174 and 351. The version for the Virgin is in *Analecta Hymnica* 40, p.82. The music for Ethelbert's sequence is preserved in the Hereford Gradual (British Library MS Harley 3965, f.113r/v) and this appears to be the only complete surviving melody for any of these three poems. It has been used to restore music to Lancaster's sequence (Appendix 4). The version for the Virgin also appears in the manuscript but with blank staves; possibly it was intended for the same melody as Ethelbert's

version but the absence of music at the close of the preceding sequence suggests rather some hiatus in the copying (ff.127v-8). It is certain, however, that the version for Thomas was associated - at least in some centres - with a different tune. I am grateful to Andrew Wathey for drawing my attention to a bifolium of an antiphonal in Gloucester Diocesan Records Office (numbered 14 in N.R. Ker, *Medieval Manuscripts in British Libraries, 2, Abbotsford-Keele* (Oxford, 1977) p.971); f.1-1v contains the last section of Thomas of Hereford's sequence with music different from that associated with Ethelbert in the Hereford Gradual.

26 *Chronica Monasterii de Melsa* (RS 43) II, p.131.

27 *Vita*, pp.93 and 98.

28 As pointed out by Maddicott, *Thomas of Lancaster*, p.3.

29 R.M. Haines, *The Church and Politics in Fourteenth Century England: The Career of Adam Orleton c1275-1345* (Cambridge, 1978) p.140.

30 *Chronicon Galfridi le Baker*, ed. E.M. Thompson (Oxford, 1889) p.16.

31 A particularly interesting case is provided by the Office for John Dalderby, bishop of Lincoln, who was never canonised. This Office (Lincolnshire County Records Office Dj/20/2) has been systematically compiled and is elaborate (there is full provision for three Nocturns at Matins each with three psalms and three Great Responsories); there is rubrication. Yet the hand is a cursive one and the leaves were clearly never intended to be bound into a liturgical book. They represent a kind of liturgical document often mentioned in inventories - the unbound quire or bundle of leaves - but very rarely encountered. Lancaster's Office in Royal 12 C. xii may well have been taken from some more systematic, yet transient and informal source.

32 Edited in Hughes, *op.cit.*, pp.10-11.

33 John Stevens, *Music and Poetry in the Early Tudor Court*, Corrected edition (Cambridge, 1979) p.50.

34 J.W. Walker, "Robin Hood Identified", *The Yorkshire Archaeological Journal* 36 (1944-7) p.30.

35 I am most grateful to Dr Peter Newton, FSA, of the Centre for Medieval Studies at the University of York, to Mr Andrew Wathey, of Merton College, Oxford, and to Mr Edward Wilson, of Worcester College, Oxford, for their help in the preparation of this article.

APPENDIX

THE OFFICE OF THOMAS OF LANCASTER

BRITISH LIBRARY, MS ROYAL 12 C.XII

TEXT The manuscript spellings have been retained, save that the scribe's consonantal *u* is everywhere reproduced as *v*. Punctuation and capitalisation are mostly mine.

MUSIC Ligatures are indicated by slurs.

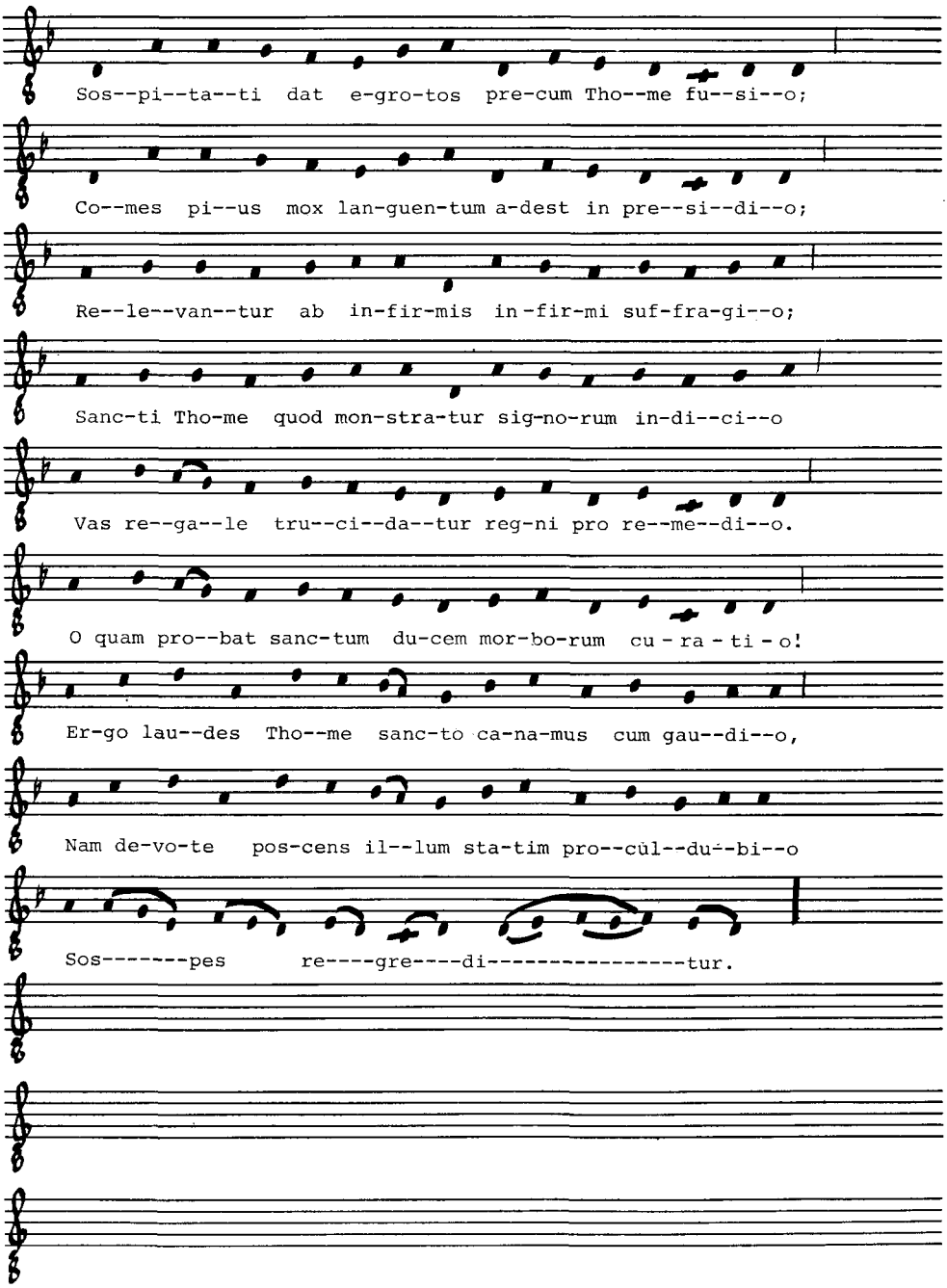
1 Antiphona GAUDE THOMA, DUCUM DECUS (Music Unidentified)

Gaude Thoma, ducum decus, lucerna Lancastrie
Qui per necem imitaris Thomam Cantuarie
Cuius capud conculcatur pacem ob ecclesie
Atque tuum detruncatur causa pacis Anglie;
Esto nobis pius tutor in omni discrimine.

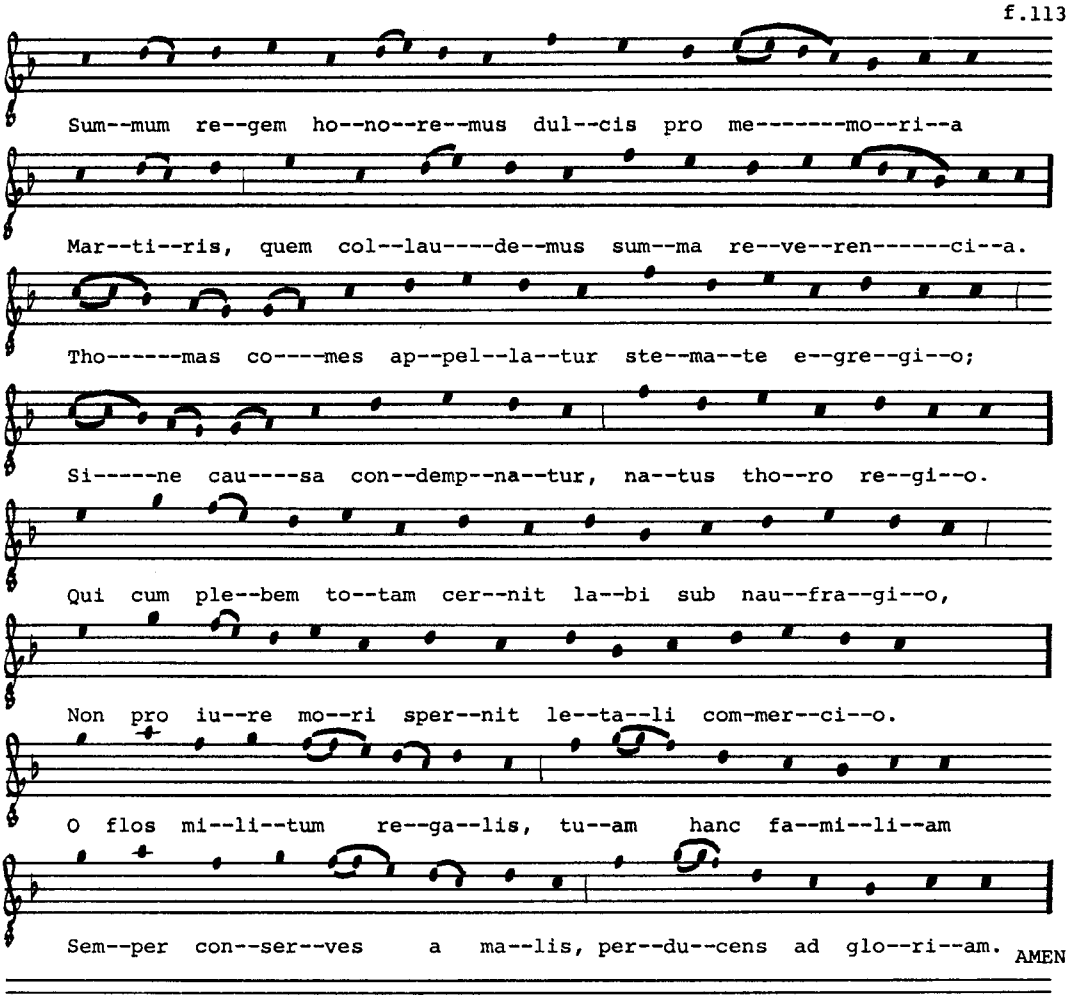
2 Oratio

Deus, qui pro pace et tranquillitate regnicolarum Anglie beatum Thomam martirem tuum atque comitem gladio persecutoris occumbere voluisti, concede propicius, ut omnes qui eius memoriam devote venerantur in terris premia condigna cum ipso consequi mereantur in celis, per Dominum nostrum.

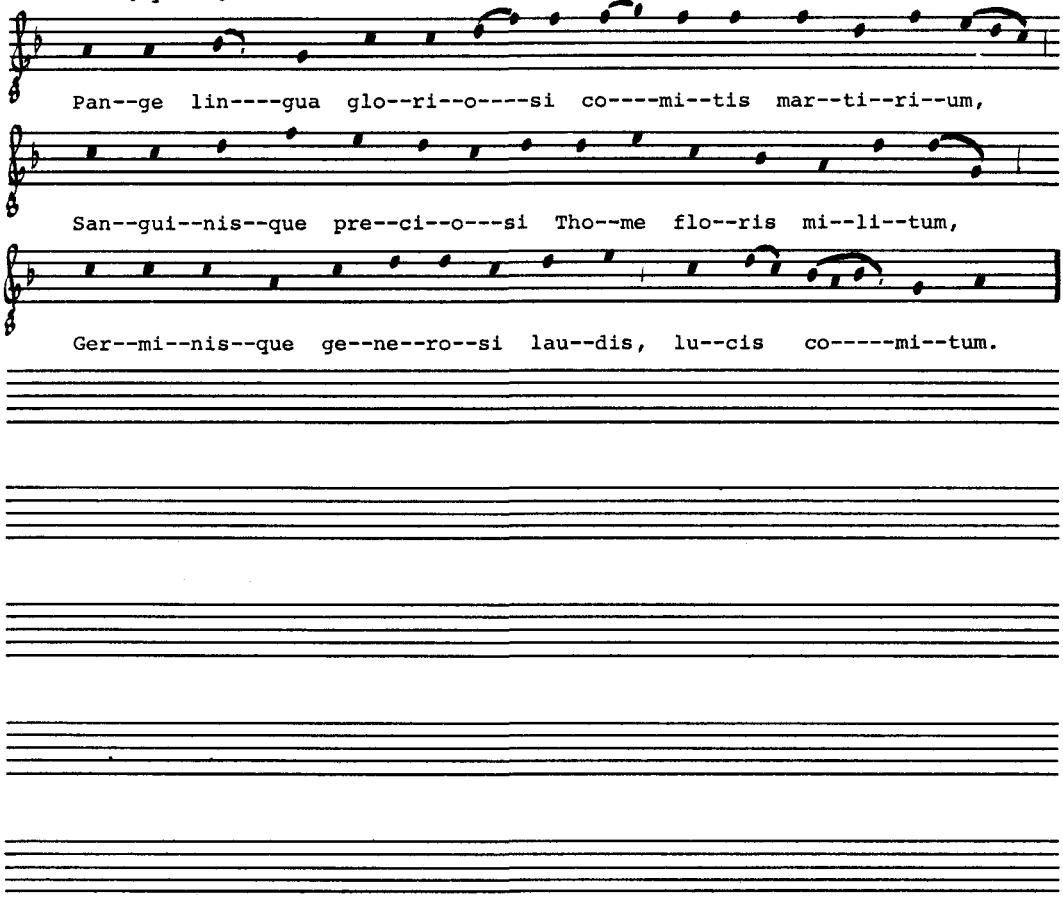
3 Prosa SOSPITATI DAT EGROTOS Music: Hereford Cathedral MS P.9.VII f.229^{V}



4 Sequencia SUMMUM REGEM HONOREMUS Music: British Library, Harley MS 3965 f.113r-v



5 [Hymnus] PANGE LINGUA Music: Hereford Cathedral, MS P.9.VII f.94^{v}



De parentis utriusque
regali prosapia
prodit Thomas, cuius pater
proles erat regia,
matrem atque sublimavit
reginam Navarria.

Dux fidelis suum gregem
dum dispersum conspicit,
emulumque suum regem
sibi motum meminit,
mox carnalem iuxta legem
in mirum contremuit.

Benedicti Benedictus
capitur vigilia;
agonista fit invictus
statim die tercia;
dire neci est addictus,
ob quod luget Anglia.

Proht dolor! azephalatur
plebis pro iuvamine,
suorumque desolatur
militum stipamine,
dum dolose defraudatur
per sudam Hoylandie.

Ad sepulcrum cuius fiunt
frequenter miracula;
ceci, claudi, surdi, muti,
membra[1] paralitica,
prece sua consequuntur
optata presidia.

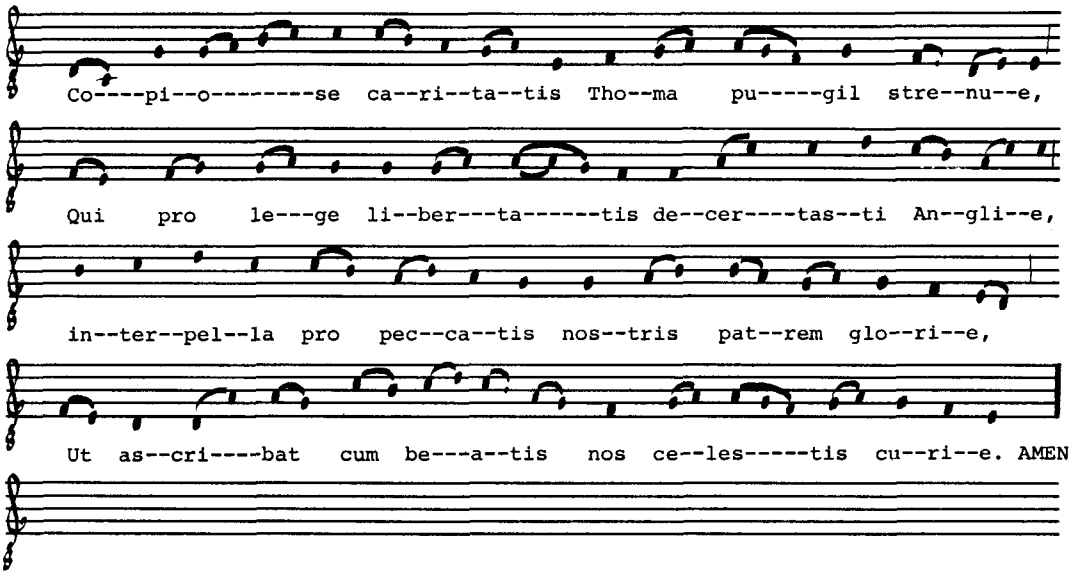
Trinitati laus et honor,
virtus et potencia
patri, proli, flaminique
sacro sit per secula,
que nos salvat a peccatis
Thome per suffragia. Amen

[1] MS: menbra

6 O IAM CHRISTI PIETAS (Music untraced, but almost certainly taken from a section of the sequence MAGNE LUCEM CARITATIS for St Thomas of Hereford)

O iam Christi pietas
atque Thome caritas
  palam elucessit.
Heu! nunc languet equitas
viget et impietas,
  veritas vilessit.
Nempe Thome bonitas
eius atque sanctitas
  indies acressit,
Ad cuius tumbam sospitas
egris datur, ut veritas
  cunctis nunc claressit.

7 [Antiphona] COPIOSE CARITATIS Music: Hereford Cathedral, MS P.9.VII f.230



Unde thomas dicum dei [illegible] fuisse / q p secum [illegible]
vis thomam canturie / cui [illegible] / [illegible] [illegible]
[illegible] / [illegible] / [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible]
[illegible] / [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible]

Deus qui pro pace et ecclesiae libertate precipuo angliae filium thomam martyrem [illegible] atque comitem [illegible] claudio [illegible] decumbendo / [illegible] concede quaesumus ut omnes qui eius memoriam devote venerantur / premia consequi [illegible] consilio [illegible] in celis [illegible]

Hymnus de sancto thoma martyre / Conditor [illegible] / [illegible] / Celebrantur ab [illegible] / [illegible] / Ecce thome quod [illegible] signorum indicio / [illegible] / [illegible] pro remedio / [illegible] / [illegible] / [illegible]

DEVOTIONAL ELEMENTS IN TWO EARLY MIDDLE ENGLISH LIVES OF CHRIST

By O.S. PICKERING

I

Elizabeth Salter's London M.A. thesis of 1949, eventually published in 1974, contains (almost as a bonus to her famous study of Nicholas Love) one of the most helpful listings of Middle English Lives of Christ.[1] The two Lives that form the subject of the present essay are the *Southern Passion*, which has been edited by B.D. Brown,[2] and the greater part (now known as the *Ministry and Passion*) of "the long poem in St John's College Cambridge MS B. 6" (Salter, p.89).[3] Both are associated with the late thirteenth-century *South English Legendary* collection. Elizabeth Salter classifies the English Lives into five types "according to material and mode of presentation" (p.55), and she places the two poems in question in different groups: the *Ministry and Passion* (*MP*) in group (c), "Lives consisting of loose paraphrase of the Biblical account, with homiletic and legendary additions", and the *Southern Passion* (*SP*) in group (d), "Lives consisting of Biblical paraphrase, homily and emotional reflection" (pp.55-6). It is the new element of "emotional reflection" that distinguishes the second group, and which indeed separates groups (a)-(c) from (d)-(e). The whole of group (d), writes Elizabeth Salter (p.98), "illustrates a changed devotional attitude to the Life of Christ. In choice and treatment of material these Lives differ strongly from all those hitherto discussed. They contain, in varying degree, a vernacular expression of the vein of affective meditation on the Humanity of Christ which runs in Latin literature from the time of Anselm onwards".

Thus *MP* is grouped with (for example) *Cursor Mundi* and the *Northern Passion*, and *SP* with Love's *Myrrour* and other versions of the pseudo-Bonaventuran *Meditationes Vitae Christi*. But *MP* and *SP* are not to be so sharply contrasted. Elizabeth Salter notes (p.100) that they are both connected with the *South English Legendary*, but not that they are textually related, even though this had been clearly stated by B.D. Brown (p.viii). The absence of an edition of *MP* left scholars in doubt about the nature of the relationship until very recently,[4] but detailed analysis of the two poems has now established that *SP* is a careful reworking of *MP*.[5] This does not in itself mean that they could not be as contrasting as Elizabeth Salter's classification implies, but the difference between them lies elsewhere than in the element of emotional reflection.

MP is a poem of 3048 lines, ranging in its narrative from the

Preaching of John the Baptist to the first Acts of the Apostles. It is predominantly biblical in content, in effect a loosely-translated gospel harmony of unique arrangement. There are certain legendary insertions, and a considerable number of usually short passages of interpretative or homiletic comment. The 2588-line *SP*, which ends at the same point as *MP* but begins with Mary Magdalene's anointing of Christ's feet, is proportionately longer than *MP*. Its author's purpose was to create a narrative both more biblical and more didactic. His method is four-fold: he variously inserts close translations of gospel passages not found in *MP*; discards *MP*'s paraphrases in favour of more accurate translations; rewrites *MP* (retaining many words and phrases) to bring it closer to the gospels; and yet again leaves *MP*'s narrative as he finds it, particularly during the central events of the Passion. His procedure is the same with expository and homiletic material: some he keeps, some he adapts, some he replaces, and much is added. There are more explanations of liturgical and ecclesiastical practices, more exhortations to live a Christian life, and more criticisms of those who don't. It is a more serious and stringent poem than *MP*.

The emotional elements are found in both poems: there are more examples in *SP*, but not of a different kind. The passages in question stand out from *MP* and *SP*'s normally restrained narrative in being apostrophes addressed to Christ. The opening lines of two such passages (together with another line in the same style) have recently been quoted as examples of *SP*'s special qualities,[6] but all three lines occur in identical form in *MP*. *MP*'s wording of these two passages is as follows:

Ihesu, to þin oþere wo what drynk was þe brouȝt!
[For] þer was non of þi lymys withoutte but þat it haþ dere vs bouȝt,
Boþe þi tunge & þi mouþ withinne þe Iewis han þorwȝsouȝt.
þi hed was þorwwounded with [þe] crounne þei hadde þeron do,
þi chekis & erys al forebete, with buffatis smetyn also,
& al þi body beneþeforth with scourgis harde bete,
Feet & handys þorwsmete with naylys blunte & grete.
þo was no lyme vnturmented but þi tunge allone
With þe qweche þou de[d]st þi moder betake into þe warde of Seynt Iohn.
Ȝit wolde not þo leþer Iewis þat [it] were without pyne,
Qwan þei ȝeuyn þe þat bitter drynk with vynegre medlyd fyne.
O Iheus, þou bouȝtest vs dere not only with þi heuede
But wol sore with euery lyme; þer was non beleuede.
þi deth [was deth] of alle deþis þat [to] ony man euere [come],
For as þe book seith, & soþ is, it passede martyrdome.
(*MP* 2498-512)[7]

O Ihesu, ho may þis here withoutte sorwe of herte?
Hard is þe herte þat þis herith but he wepe & smerte,
þat þou schuldist for vs wepe & so bitterlych grede,
& for vs lete þi swete lyf - allas oure wrecchedehede!
þe erþe myȝt not bere þi deth, þat is þing withoutte rede,
But þat it gryslyche quakede, as ho seith for drede.

Allas, man, qwere is þin herte? How mayst þou here þis
But þou tremele & quake for drede, so reufull þing it is?
Trees & stonys suffred not þ[at] his herte brak in to,
Alle þat ny3 þe place were, but þat þei bruste also.
Cloþis þat in þe temple were al toclef in þe mydde;
Dede mennys beryelys brokyn eke, as [3if] mercy to bidde.
Ihesus, hard was þi deþ qwan harde trees & stonys
Tobrustyn þo þin herte brak & beryelis with mannys bonys.
Man, how mayst þou heryn þis [but] þin herte br[e]ke anon?
Allas, man, and is þin herte hardere þan ony ston?
þi lord + deyde in so strong peyne & in so strong a deþe
For þe, & þou art his hyne and sory art vnneþe.
Sunne & erþe, stonys and trees, here vertu gunne quenche,
& þou for qwom he suffred his deth vnneþe wil on hym þenche.
(*MP* 2539-58)

These extracts correspond closely to *SP* 1524-38 and 1583-1602. There is also a third emotional passage common to both poems at *MP* 2579-612/*SP* 1645-78, on how the Jews shed every drop of blood in Christ's body.

In addition to these shared emotional passages *SP* contains two others not in *MP*, namely 1109-16 and 1603-24. The first occurs in the middle of what in *MP* is a continuous narrative of the Agony in the Garden (*SP* 1105-08, 1117-20 are parallel to *MP* 2163-70), and reads as follows:

O Ihesu swete þing . whar is oure heorte now?
ffor to þolye so strong deþ . lutel gult haddestou,
þat ar þou come þer-to . þe blody dropes rede
þou swattest, Ihesu, swete þing . strong was þi drede.
Bou3testou vs al wiþ nou3t . nay, lemman ywis,
Strong was þi deþ atten ende . Ihesu kyng of blis,
Whanne þou ar þou come þer-to . swattest red blod.
How mi3tou, man, þis yhure . bote þou chaunge þi mod?
(*SP* 1109-16)

It seems to have been inspired by the detail of the drops of blood in *MP* 2165-6 (1107-08), and it replaces the short devotional apostrophe with which *MP* ends its account of the Agony:

Lord Ihesu, mekil was þi loue þat þou schewedyst þere,
þat þou wendyst to þi deth & haddist þerto so gret fere!
(*MP* 2173-4)

The reviser was evidently capable of writing an emotional lament of his own in a style very similar to that of the shared passages.

SP 1603-24 is a more complicated matter. It follows immediately on the shared *MP* 2539-58/*SP* 1583-1602, quoted above, and describes Christ's physical pain when hanging on the Cross:

A prophete spak of oure lord . longe byffore þis dede,
And þorw oure lordes mouþ . þeose wordes he sede:
'A ffox him may ffynde a stey . and a turtle a nest al-so, 1605

Whar-ynne hi sitte mowe & walwy . & hare ese do,
Ak Ihesus nys on eorþe nouȝt . so muche goed byleued
Wher-vp he mowe enes . reste his wery heued'.
O Ihesu swete þing . were þou so pouere þo
Nere þou kyng of alle kynges . whoder was þi goed y-do? 1610
þe nas so muche goed ygraunted . wher-vpe þou miȝttest deye
Ne a wrecche torf of þe eorþe . bote henge in þe eyr heye;
Ne þi sely lymes . nere ygraunted to þe na-mo
þat eny miȝte oþer helpe . how miȝte þer beo more wo?
þine armes were wyde ystreyt . þine hondes y-nayled ffaste, 1615
þat þou ne miȝttest in al þi wo . to þin heued ones caste.
Ne þou ne miȝttest bere vp þin heued . so strong was þi deþ,
Ne whar-vp hit lenye . wel harde þou lete þi breþ.
þei hit miȝte to þi shuldres come . þi croune of þornes þo
þer-on wolde deope wade . and þat hadde ȝut ybeo more wo. 1620
How miȝte so pouere deþ . eny man here y-seo?
Byter and strong and eke pouere . Ihesu yhered þou beo.
No wonder hit nas þei þe sonne . in derkhede were ydo,
Whanne treos and harde stones . and cloþes to-borste al-so.
(*SP* 1603-24)

The final couplet reverts to the subject-matter of the preceding passage, which may suggest that *SP* has made an insertion, but although there is no trace of 1603-24 in the extant *MP* there is a corresponding passage in another related poem, the *Abridged Life of Christ* (*ALC*). The principal source of this composition is unmistakeably *MP*, which it drastically compresses,[8] and it normally agrees with *SP* only when the latter is following *MP*. In this case, however, *ALC* 447-72 seem to be related to *SP* 1603-24. There is an obvious difference in that the first part (447-54, 457-8) and the last couplet are cast in the form of an address by Christ from the Cross, and there are no apostrophes to Christ; but the sequence of ideas is the same, and there are very similar phrases:

Oure lord sede womman lo here þy sone . ybrouȝt in grete pyne
For mannes gultes nouþ here . & noþyng for myne
Al þat goþ by þe way . dwelleþ a luytel wyle
& lokeþ he sede war any pine . oþer sorwe be as myne 450
þerfor he sede þe wolf haþ sty . ware he may lygge & reste
& þe foul to legge . his breddes haþ neste
Ic þat am godes sone . me nys noȝt byleued
So muche place ware ic may . legge on myn heued
þe gywes maden mowen on hym . & sayde if þou haddest myȝt 455
& if þou ert godes sone . wy nelt þou adon lyȝt
My body sede oure lord . is blody & wan
Alas sede oure swete lord . þat ic euer made man
Alas man wy nelt þou þis . vnderstonde in þy þoȝt
Hou lytel ioie oure lord hadde . in þe rode ynayled so touȝt 460
His armes wer ystraȝt . fram hym so wyde
& faste ynailed to þe hard tre . boþ in ayþer syde
þat he ne myȝt for no þing . to his heued hem fette
Ne in non half his heued . þerwith vndersette
þus he lyned his heued . vppon his scholdere adoune 465
He hadde also on his heued . of þornes ymade a croune

þe þornes were þeron . swyþ scharp & longe
þat wende on his heued . & made hym woundes stronge
For soþ he was þe deþ so ney . for þe grete turment
He ne myȝt noȝt bere his heued & hey . for þe hard iuggement 470
þo sede oure lord me nys noȝt . so muche byleued
War vpon ic may lyny . & legge myn heued (*ALC* 447-72)[9]

Because of the correspondence with *SP* there is a strong possibility that *MP* originally contained a similar passage. In wording this would probably have been closer to *SP* than to *ALC*. *MP* and *SP* are careful not to attribute to Christ any non-canonical speeches ("Oure lord seyde to hem no more þat we owher don rede", *MP* 2493/*SP* 1519), but *ALC*, not subject to similar restraint, makes Christ speak the *prophete*'s words in his own person,[10] as part of an appeal from the Cross in the style of contemporary lyrics.[11] It is therefore likely that *SP* 1605-08 are closer than *ALC* 451-4 to what *MP* may once have had, and (given that *ALC*'s author is engaged in rewriting) *SP* 1615-20 closer than *ALC* 461-70. *SP* 1603-04, 1609-14, and 1621-4 are not paralleled in *ALC* but could well have existed in *MP*, if this poem ever contained the passage. 1609-14 are the lines most likely to have been added by the *SP* reviser.

The uncertainty about the origin of *SP* 1603-24 underlines the now evident conclusion that there is no essential difference in poetic mode between any of the emotional passages in *MP* and *SP*, whether or not they are common to the two poems. *SP*'s author appears to write with a greater fervour, as may be seen from the epiphets applied to Christ (although it is possible that these may be scribal in origin). In the passages not in *MP* we find *lemman* (1113) and *swete þing* (1109, 1112, 1609), and in the shared passages *Swete Ihesu* (1645, 1667) where *MP* has *Ihesu* and *Blissid Ihesu* (2579, 2601). But this is not a difference in kind, only in degree. The authors of the two poems apostrophize Christ and Man in the same way, exclaiming at the former's sufferings and love, and admonishing the latter for his hardness of heart.

II

Beatrice Brown, the editor of *SP*, devotes a section of her invaluable discussion of the poem's sources to "The *Meditationes Vitae Christi* and the *Lignum Vitae*". The former, one of the best-known devotional works of the Middle Ages, is a spurious work of St Bonaventura (1221-74), the latter an authentic one. Mrs Brown claims that *SP* "is cast in the same general mould as the *Meditationes*, that of commentated narrative interrupted with emotional apostrophe" (p.lxxix), and that "On the whole it would seem that the poet had been impressed by the general purpose and method of the *Meditationes Vitae Christi*, and had evolved a highly simplified work on the same lines" (pp.lxxx-lxxxi). In support of these claims of broad resemblance she adduces a number of detailed parallels, and notes, too, certain passages in *SP* which are especially close to the *Lignum Vitae*.

Mrs Brown's conclusion that *SP* was influenced by the *Meditationes*

(*MVC*) has been generally accepted by Middle English scholars.[12] Less notice has been paid by students of *MVC* itself, but C. Fischer, writing in 1932,[13] may have been influenced by the implications of her arguments for the dating of the Latin work and for the question of its authorship (first noted by Brown herself, pp.xci-xcii). *MVC* is usually dated c.1300, but *SP* can confidently be dated c.1275-85 (Brown, p.xii); and while a date of c.1300 means that *MVC* could not possibly be by Bonaventura, a date several decades earlier pushes it back into his lifetime. When for *SP* is substituted the older *MP* (for what Mrs Brown says about *MVC* and *SP* holds in almost every case for *MP*), the date of the Latin work in theory becomes earlier still. Fischer in fact argued on other grounds that the Passion section of *MVC* was authentic Bonaventura and thus pre-1274. His conclusions have largely been rejected by later *MVC* scholars,[14] and Mrs Brown's must also be disputed. Both *SP*'s supposed broad and particular correspondences with *MVC* can be called into question.

Mrs Brown divides the supposed detailed resemblances to *MVC* (and the *Lignum Vitae*) into five groups, which she calls "Explanatory comment", "Graphic detail", "Quality of feeling", "Themes and phrasing of emotional passages", and "Hortatory tone". But she assembles in support no more than thirteen passages from *SP* (eleven of which occur in *MP*), and only six of these are more than two lines long.

The seven short passages do not seem especially significant, and need little comment:

SP 1349 (*MP* 2333), an interjection on the shame that the Jews inflicted on Christ. The wording is close to the sentence that Brown (p.lxxxv) quotes from *MVC* cap. 77,[15] but there it is placed during the Journey to Calvary, not, as in the poems, during the Trial before Pilate.

SP 1423 (*MP* 2399), "Sharpe and kene were þe þornes . hi wente to þe scolle". Brown (p.lxxxiii) claims that "not only the concrete detail but the narrative manner corresponds", but the Latin (cap. 76) reads "Perforabant namque caput ejus sacratissimum acerbissimae illae spinae", and continues (not quoted by Brown) "ac totum madere faciebant sanguine" (Peltier, p.604) - a "graphic detail" not in the poems.

SP 1438 (*MP* 2414), on the shame of carrying the Cross. The motif appears at the same point in *MVC* (cap. 77), but despite what Brown says (p.lxxxii) it was a common theme.[16]

SP 1581-2 (*MP* 2537-8), the moment of Christ's death: " . . . and þo closede his eye, / And his heued heng adoun . and myd þat word gan to deye". Brown (p.lxxxiii) claims that here, too, both the concrete detail and the narrative manner correspond, but the passage in *MVC* (cap. 79) reads: "Et ex tunc languere coepit more morientum, modo claudendo oculos, modo aperiendo, et caput inclinare" (Peltier, p.607), after which Christ speaks again before dying. The poems' simpler description is closer to the Gospels (cf. Jo. xix. 30).

SP 1583 (*MP* 2539), the first line of one of the shared emotional passages, quoted earlier ("O Ihesu who may þis yhure . wiþoute wop of heorte?"). Brown (p.lxxxix) relates it to a rhetorical appeal

not in *MVC* but in the *Lignum Vitae*. The similarity undoubtedly exists, but the Latin sentence has the very different context of Christ's examination by the high priests (the paragraph "Jesus vultu velatus", Peltier, p.75). Again, the sentiment was common.

SP 1671 (*MP* 2605), "Namore schame þan hi dude . ne miȝte þe gywes þe do", from the third emotional passage common to the poems. Brown (p.lxxxv) refers to *MVC* cap. 79, but the relevant phrase reads "et quantum poterant, nocuerunt" (Peltier, p.607), i.e. "did harm", not "did shame". As in other cases, the context is different.

Finally, *SP* 837-8, not in *MP*, are more significant than the other lines so far discussed, for they make the striking comment that if Peter, at the Last Supper, had known that Judas was the traitor, he would have torn him apart with his teeth. *MVC* cap. 73 makes the same point in the same context, but, as Brown allows (p.lxxxii), the writer explicitly cites Augustine as his authority. The comment was therefore not original.

The supposed resemblances so far discussed do not carry even sufficient cumulative weight to make it likely that *MP/SP* used *MVC* as a source, and of the six more substantial parallels cited by Mrs Brown and now to be examined, only two relate primarily to *MVC* itself.

Two of the six she admits are closer to Jacobus de Voragine's *Legenda Aurea*.[17] The first of them (*SP* 1524-40, *MP* 2498-514) is also the first of the shared emotional passages, and was quoted earlier. The subject is the idea that tasting the vinegar and gall was the climax of Christ's physical suffering. This is briefly found in the paragraph "Jesus felle et aceto potatus" of the *Lignum Vitae* (Brown's reference to *MVC* cap. 79 is less close), but *MP/SP*'s development resembles a passage, attributed to St Bernard, in *Legenda* cap. 53, as Brown shows (pp.lxxxvi-lxxxvii). The second parallel with the *Legenda* (*SP* 1645-70, *MP* 2579-604) comprises the greater part of the third of the shared emotional passages, describing how the Jews shed every drop of each of the three kinds of blood in Christ's body. As before, Brown finds the essence of the idea in the *Lignum Vitae* ("Jesus cruore madidus") and a more detailed exposition, closer to the poems, in *Legenda* cap. 53 (Brown, pp.lxxxvii-lxxxviii).

Another two of the longer parallels Mrs Brown refers wholly to the *Lignum Vitae*. They involve *SP* 1547-50 (*MP* 2521-4) and *SP* 1587-98 (*MP* 2543-54), which she considers together on pp.lxxxix-xc: the second falls within the second shared emotional passage, quoted above. The theme is the behaviour of natural phenomena when Christ dies. In the first case the sun hides its light, refusing to shine when its creator is suffering, and in the second the earth, stones, trees, and graves break open, showing more compassion than man, whose heart remains unmoved. There is undoubted similarity to passages in the paragraph "Jesus Sol morte pallidus" of the *Lignum Vitae*, but it must be said again that the ideas were also in general circulation.[18]

The two remaining parallels, with *MVC* itself, deserve more

serious consideration. One of them is *SP* 2159-68, a passage which gives three reasons why Christ allowed his wounds to remain visible after the Resurrection. Exactly these explanations occur at the same point in *MVC* cap. 93, and Mrs Brown (p.lxxxiii n.55) was unable to trace the same three elsewhere. The passage does not, however, occur in *MP*. It was evidently added by the reviser, and therefore has no bearing on whether the original form of the poem was influenced by *MVC*.[19]

The other and final parallel is with *MVC*'s well-known description of the process of Crucifixion in cap. 78, where Christ is said to be nailed to the Cross after it has already been set upright in the ground. Mrs Brown (p.lxxxiv) quotes the following passage:

> Hic modum crucis diligenter attende. Ponuntur duae scalae, una retrorsum ad brachium dextrum, alia ad sinistrum brachium, super quas malefici ascendunt cum clavis, et martellis. Ponitur etiam alia scala ex parte anteriori, attingens usque ad locum ubi debebant pedes affigi. Conspice nunc . . . compellitur Dominus Iesus ascendere per hanc scalam parvam . . .
> (Peltier, pp.605-06),

and compares it with *SP* 1459-61 (*MP* 2435-7):

> Laddren hi hadde on eyþer half . oure lord vp hi bere,
> And henge him heyour þan eny þeof . ich wene þat þo were.
> þorw eyþer hond hi smyte a nayl . & þorw þe ffet þe þridde.

She claims that these descriptions are "virtually identical", and that the correspondence is particularly noteworthy because the *MVC* is "unique among Latin treatises on the Passion in thus describing the mode of crucifixion" (as opposed to the more familiar "prostrate" method)[20] and is the ultimate authority for it.

But in fact the "upright" Crucifixion is attested long before the late thirteenth century. Earlier medieval art contains instances of Christ ascending the Cross by means of a ladder,[21] and literary accounts, too, often leave it in no doubt that Christ was fastened to an already erect Cross: the Old English *Dream of the Rood* is an obvious case. For an example from the first half of the thirteenth century one need go no further than the Middle English *Wooing of Our Lord*:

> A, nu have thai broht him thider. A, nu raise thai up the rode; setis up the warh-treo. A, nu nacnes mon mi lef. A, nu driven ha him up with swepes and with schurges. A, hu live I for reowthe that seo nu mi lefmon up o rode and swa to drahen hise limes that I mai in his bodi euch ban tellen. A, hu that ha nu driven irnene neiles thurh thine feire hondes into hard rode, thurh thine freoliche fet.[22]

The mention of ladders is admittedly unusual in thirteenth-century literary treatments of the Crucifixion, but *MP/SP*'s few lines are far too generalised to be referable to *MVC*'s circumstantial description, which is much longer than the extract quoted by Mrs Brown and

which ends with a brief account of the alternative prostrate Crucifixion. In particular, *MVC* differs from *MP/SP* in having three ladders and in depicting Christ as climbing up by himself.

Even if some of the suggested resemblances between *MVC* and *MP/SP* were admitted to be significant, it must be asked whether *MP*'s author would have picked from *MVC* only the few ideas and details in question, and left so very much more untouched. Only a memorial knowledge of the work could easily explain this procedure, and it then follows that he could be remembering from a range of sources, not just one. Mrs Brown (p.lxxx) allows that "a large proportion of the actual subject-matter of the *Meditationes* does not appear in the *Southern Passion*", and she herself suggests that "certain striking passages . . . had impressed themselves on the poet's memory, while the bulk of information was naturally forgotten". *SP*, she admits, contains "none of the speculative discussion" and nothing of "the mass of apocryphal incident relating to the Blessed Virgin".

If this is the case, she is exaggerating when at the same time she claims that *MVC* "supplied the general norm" for *SP* and that there is a "general correspondence in structure" (p.lxxx). *MP* is predominantly biblical and *SP* even more so. They are continuous gospel harmonies with an arrangement of material found (so far as is known) nowhere else, and take as little from *MVC* in the way of design or structure as they do distinctive content. What can be said is simply that *MP/SP* and *MVC* independently represent a shift towards a consistent narrative account of the Life and Passion of Christ and away from the more fragmented approach commonly found in earlier works cast in other literary forms.[23]

Similarly, the "general mould" of the poems cannot be said, as in *MVC*, to be "commentated narrative interrupted with emotional apostrophe" (Brown, p.lxxix). In *MP* and *SP* the latter element is concentrated in the central sections of the Passion and forms only a tiny proportion of the whole. In particular, none of *MP* and *SP*'s three shared passages of emotional apostrophe is derived from *MVC*. As we have seen, Mrs Brown refers two to the *Legenda Aurea* and the third to the *Lignum Vitae*. She makes no mention of *SP*'s additional emotional passages, and these also do not depend on *MVC*.

Mrs Brown also makes much of what she claims are close similarities in *SP* and *MVC*'s authorial attitude and purpose. She is right in saying that both are didactic and that they share (at least during *MP/SP*'s emotional passages) "a note of reproachful exhortation" (p.lxxxix). But is it really true that "The relation of writer to audience is the same", and that the English poems reflect the same "urgent desire to move men to sympathetic meditation" (p.lxxxix)? One of *MVC*'s most noticeable and appealing characteristics is the intimacy and tenderness with which each reader feels himself led personally through the book, as if by an individual guide. It exemplifies to perfection the "deictic" mode, in which the reader is made an eye-witness to the action and gently but consistently urged to "Imagine this" or "Look now".[24] There is nothing of this in *MP* and *SP*, which generally inhabit an altogether less inspired world of plain narrative and impersonal exposition, and

this sharp contrast in authorial method makes irrelevant the occasionally similar "intensity of feeling" (Brown, p.lxxxv).

III

MP and *SP* are to some extent hybrid compositions. They fall between Elizabeth Salter's (c) and (d) groups of English Lives of Christ, in that they consist predominantly of "loose paraphrase of the Biblical account, with homiletic and legendary additions", but have also several passages of "emotional reflection" which fit somewhat strangely with the lower temperature of their surroundings. The source of these passages is almost certainly not to be sought in one particular work, such as *MVC*, but generally in the affective tradition of devotion to the humanity of Christ, which was well-established in England long before *MVC* was written.[25] *MP* and *SP*'s emotional passages show the influence of the exclamatory style popularised by St Bernard and St Anselm, and developed in the treatises and meditations that circulated under their names. For example:

> O lacrymae, ubi vos subtraxistis, ubi estis, fontes lacrymarum? Humectate maxillas meas, irrigate genas meas, fluite super faciem. Heu me miserum! omnis creatura compatitur Christo, et turbatur de morte sua, sed miserum cor meum non compatitur Creatori suo morienti pro ipso. Flete me, coelum et terra; lugete me, omnes creaturae. Melius esset me non esse creatum, quam sic induratum cor meum remanere de tanta morte. O Domine! quantum humiliasti te![26]

In terms of the English vernacular, *MP* and *SP* look back (though at a lower level of intensity) to the passionate utterances of the *Wooing of Our Lord* (quoted from earlier) and forward to Rolle's Passion meditations:

> Lord, þi swete passyown reysyd þe dede of here gravys and þei walkyd abowte; hyt openyd helle ȝatys, þe erthe tremblyd þerewith, þe sonne lost hys lyȝt, and my sory herte, þat is of þe develys kynde, hardere þan þe stonys þat clovyn at þi deth, it may not of þi passyoun a lytel poynt fele, ne I ryse not with þe dede in reuthe þereoffe, ne I cleve not as þe temple, ne os þe erthe tremble, ne opene þe closyng þat is so harde speryd.[27]

But although these comparisons can be made, *MP* and *SP* are not "personal" in the same way as these classic devotional works. Although their authors write as if expressing their own response to Christ's sufferings (and certainly they are less self-effacing than *MVC*'s author), they do not involve themselves as sinners in need of Christ's loving sacrifice, nor their audience as individuals to be appealed to personally. Anselm, Bernard, Rolle concentrate entirely on their own particular relationship to the Passion: "the appeal to the reader", as Mrs Brown remarks (p.lxxix) "is not made through precept or direct admonition; it is inherent in the fervent

expression of the writer's own feeling". St Edmund's *Speculum Ecclesiae*, *MVC*, Pseudo-Bede's *De Meditatione Passionis Christi*[28] represent a separate tradition in which the reader is conducted personally through the meditative process. *MP* and *SP* are different from both. Their emotional apostrophes to Christ exclude all reference to their author's own personalities, and the "man" who is exhorted to have a change of heart is generalised mankind, not the individual reader or hearer:

> Ihesu, hard was þi deþ qwan harde trees & stonys
> Tobrustyn þo þin herte brak & beryelis with mannys bonys.
> Man, how mayst þou heryn þis [but] þin herte br[e]ke anon?
> Allas, man, and is þin herte hardere þan ony ston?
> þi lord + deyde in so strong peyne & in so strong a deþe
> For þe, & þou art his hyne and sory art vnneþe.
> (*MP* 2551-56)

Examples of this kind of apostrophe are scarce in contemporary Middle English writings,[29] it being more usual (if the treatment of the Passion is not merely descriptive) either for the author to pray to the crucified Christ or for Christ to address mankind from the Cross. There is, it seems, nothing so heightened as *MP* and *SP*'s emotional passages in late thirteenth-century English religious lyric. The Harley lyrics "Iesu, for þi muchele miht" and "I syke when y singe" contain, respectively, a short reproachful address to man and exclamations of grief addressed to Christ, but their tone is gentle and restrained compared to the passages in *MP* and *SP*.[30] Closer in style is one of the renderings of "Respice in faciem Christi":

> Loke to þi louerd, man, þar hanget he a rode,
> and wep hyf þo mist terres al of blode.
> Vor loke hu his heued biis mid þornes bi-wnde,
> and to his neb so bispet and to þe spere-wnde.
> Faluet his feyre luer, and desewet his sicte,
> drowepet his hendi bodi þat on rode biis itiht . . .[31]

This poem has a deictic element, but otherwise it is impersonal in the same way as *MP* and *SP* in that it lacks a "meditating 'I'" and universalises the audience.[32] Rosemary Woolf quotes it as an example of a Passion lyric cast in the form of "sermon address",[33] and the same phrase can help us to categorise *MP* and *SP*'s emotional passages. Their devotional response to the Passion is also more akin to that of the sermon than to that of the meditative lyric, and seen in this light they do not fit so strangely with the didactic colouring of the surrounding verse.

Forthright but impersonal expression of feeling is also a characteristic of other *South English Legendary* poems. Authorial apostrophe to Christ is a rhetorical feature found, for example, in *St Lawrence*:

> Louerd muche was þe pine . þat he þolede for þe here (189);[34]

in *St Mary of Egypt*:

Ou Iesus muche is þi miȝte . muche þoledestou þere (51)

and in the *Nativity of Mary and Christ*:

Welle, lord, muchel þoledestou on erþe vs to lere (307).[35]

Such interjections seem to be a natural part of the *Legendary's* uninhibited conversational style, a style which also allows Judas and Herod to be directly addressed, disapprovingly:

Wrecchid Iudas, qwy askid þou not of mercy to affonge?
Qwy þouȝttyst þou not on his grace or þou þiself þe honge?
(*MP* 2377-8);

Awey, Heroudes, þou wrecche kyng, þou huntest aboute nouht!
Sore þou drast þoru him to be of þi kyndom out ybrouht . . .
... Whi slowe þou for haterede of him þe children þat gultles were?
Wel he wuste, wrecche, þi þouht; ne founde þou him nout [þere]!
(*Nativity of Mary and Christ*, 669-70, 673-4)

There are also frequent appeals and asides to (so it would seem) a listening audience, for example at *All Souls* 191:

For ich wot non of ȝou nescholde . hem habbe so sore agaste.

The *Legendary* is not a collection of sermons and may not even have been written for recitation, but its poetic manner is nevertheless that of popular instruction and communication. *MP* and *SP*'s emotional passages are remarkable expressions of feeling, but they are publicly rather than privately devotional.

NOTES

1 *Nicholas Love's "Myrrour of the Blessed Lyf of Jesu Christ"*, Analecta Cartusiana 10 (Salzburg, 1974), Chapter IV, especially pp.73-118; referred to here as "Salter". The bibliographical references are up-dated from the 1949 thesis, which was submitted under the author's maiden name of Jones, and bore the title "Nicholas Love's Fifteenth-Century Translation of the *Meditationes Vitae Christi*: a Study, with Special Reference to the Passion Section".

2 EETS OS 169 (1927), referred to here as "Brown". All quotations from the *Southern Passion* are from this edition.

3 I am preparing a critical edition of the *Ministry and Passion* for publication in 1984 in the Middle English Texts series of Carl Winter Universitätsverlag, Heidelberg. The "long poem" to which Elizabeth Salter refers has also been known as the "Long Life of Christ", but the first part has now been recognised as a separate composition to which the *Ministry and Passion* forms a sequel: see *The South English Nativity of Mary and Christ*, ed. O.S. Pickering, Middle English Texts 1 (Heidelberg, 1975) pp.20-3.

4 See, for example, the uncertainty admitted in Manfred Görlach, *The Textual Tradition of the South English Legendary*, Leeds Texts and Monographs, n.s. 6 (Leeds, 1974) p.19.

5 The evidence is presented in my article, "The *Southern Passion* and the *Ministry and Passion*: the Work of a Middle English Reviser", forthcoming in *Leeds Studies in English* for 1984. The statement that *MP* is derived from *SP*, made in O.S. Pickering, "The *Temporale* Narratives of the *South English Legendary*", *Anglia* 91 (1973) pp.445-6, now needs correction.

6 *SP* 1524, 1583, and 1349, in Derek Pearsall, *Old English and Middle English Poetry* (London, 1977) p.106.

7 Quotations from *MP* are from the text to be published in my critical edition (see fn.3 above), based on St John's College, Cambridge, MS B.6, ff.35r-69v. [ ] indicates an editorial addition or substitution, + an editorial omission.

8 See Pickering, "The *Temporale* Narratives", pp.446-8, and the introduction to the forthcoming edition of *MP*.

9 The poem is unprinted. I quote from Trinity College, Cambridge, MS R.3.25, ff.185v-6r.

10 MS Harley 2247's text of *SP* 1604, reading *As*, i.e. "as if", instead of *And* (Brown, p.59), makes it clearer that Christ spoke through the prophet, not the prophet through Christ. The verse "Vulpes foveas habent, et volucres coeli nidos; filius autem hominis non habet ubi caput reclinet" was in fact spoken by Christ himself during his Ministry (Mt. viii, 20; also Lu. ix, 58), but *SP* is apparently referring to Ps. lxxxiv, 3, "Etenim passer invenit sibi domum; et turtur nidum sibi . . ."

11 Egerton 1993, the other principal manuscript of the *Abridged Life*, moves even further away from the presumed original form of the passage, and recasts 447-54, 459-64 into short couplets, e.g. "Alle þat goþ bi þe weie . ibideþ a while ich ou preiȝe / And lokeþ he seide whar eni pine . or eni serwe be aȝen mine" (f.26v).

12 Salter, p.101; Pearsall, *Old English and Middle English Poetry*, p.106.

13 "Die 'Meditationes vitae Christi': ihre handschriftliche Ueberlieferung und die Verfasserfrage", *Archivum franciscanum historicum*, 25 (1932) pp.3-35, 175-209, 305-48, 449-83. He refers briefly to Brown's edition of *SP* on pp.345 and 476.

14 Convenient summaries of recent opinion about *MVC*'s date and authorship are provided in *Meditaciones de passione Christi olim Sancto Bonaventurae attributae*, ed. Sister M. Jordan Stallings, Catholic University of America, Studies in Medieval and Renaissance Language and Literature, 25 (Washington, 1965), and in Walter Baier, *Untersuchungen zu den Passionsbetrachtungen in der 'Vita Christi' des Ludolf von Sachsen: ein quellenkritischer Beitrag zu Leben und Werk Ludolfs und zur Geschichte der Passionstheologie*, Analecta Cartusiana 44, 3 vols. (Salzburg, 1977), II, pp.326-8. E. Colledge, in "'Dominus cuidam devotae suae': a Source for Pseudo-Bonaventura", *Franciscan Studies* 36 (1976) pp.105-7, has recently advanced fresh evidence for a date of composition not earlier than 1300. A.G. Little, *English Franciscan History* (Manchester, 1917) p.146, stated that the Latin preaching handbook *Fasciculus Morum* refers to "Bonaventura (Life of Christ)", a point taken up for dating purposes by Brown, p.lv, and Salter, p.41. *Fasciculus Morum* is usually dated c.1320, but Siegfried Wenzel, *Verses in Sermons: "Fasciculus Morum" and its Middle English Poems* (Cambridge, Mass., 1978) pp.26-34, has now re-dated it to the beginning of the fourteenth century. Professor Wenzel tells me, however, that he knows of no reference to *MVC* in the *Fasciculus*, and he suggests that Little may have been misled by the reference to the apocryphal Infancy Gospel in Book III.

15 I have used the edition by A.C. Peltier, *Opera omnia S. Bonaventurae* (Paris, 1868), XII, pp.509-630, and the translation by Isa Ragusa and Rosalie B. Green, *Meditations on the Life of Christ: an Illustrated Manuscript of the Fourteenth Century* (Princeton, 1961).

16 Cf. ultimately Ezechiel xxxii, 24, "et portaverunt ignominiam suam cum his, qui descundunt in lacum". Mrs Brown does not record that the "less close analogue" she quotes from Pseudo-Bernard, *Sermo de Vita et Passione Domini*, *PL* 184, col. 960, occurs with almost identical wording in the paragraph "Jesus cruci elevatus" of the *Lignum Vitae* (Peltier, *ed.cit.*, XII, p.76).

17 Ed. T. Graesse (Dresden, 1846; 3rd edition, 1890).

18 See, for example, *Meditations on the Life and Passion of Christ*, ed. C. D'Evelyn, EETS OS 158 (1921) ll.1143-52. This work is a fourteenth-century translation of John of Hoveden's *Philomena* of the later thirteenth century.

19 It is notable that *SP* 837-8, the most striking of the short "parallels" with *MVC* (see above), also does not occur in *MP*. But the fact that *SP* contains two new passages (totalling twelve lines) that can be closely paralleled in *MVC* does not amount to proof that the work itself was known to the reviser any more than to *MP*'s author. The chronology, too, remains difficult.

20 For a discussion of the two methods of Crucifixion, see F.P. Pickering, *Literature and Art in the Middle Ages* (Coral Gables, Florida, 1970) pp.236-45; see also E. Roy, *Le mystère de la Passion en France du XIVe au XVIe siècle* (Paris, 1904) pp.91-3.

21 See the illustrations in G. Millet, *Recherches sur l'iconographie de l'Évangile* (Paris, 1916), chap. VI. I owe this reference (and some others) to Mr Peter Rees-Jones, who is making a study of the subject.

22 Quoted from *Middle English Religious Prose*, ed. N.F. Blake, York Medieval Texts (London, 1972) p.70.

23 For example, Peter Comestor's *Historia Scholastica*, Vincent of Beauvais' *Speculum Historiale*, and the *Legenda Aurea*; the meditations and sermons of Bernard and his followers; and of course the liturgy.

24 See Pamela Gradon, *Form and Style in Early English Literature* (London, 1971) p.308; Douglas Gray, *Themes and Images in the Medieval English Religious Lyric* (London, 1972) pp.126-7.

25 See Salter, pp.119-49.

26 Pseudo-Bernard, *Lamentatio in Passionem Christi*, *PL* 184, col. 772, here quoted from Gradon, *Form and Style*, p.301.

27 Quoted from *English Writings of Richard Rolle, Hermit of Hampole*, ed. Hope Emily Allen (Oxford, 1931) p.26.

28 *PL* 94, cols. 561-8.

29 Among Latin works, it is noticeable that the *Lignum Vitae* also addresses mankind in a general way. To the passages quoted by Brown (pp.lxxxix and xc) and already referred to may, for example, be added: "Et tu, perdite homo, totius confusionis et contritionis hujus causa existens, quomodo non in fletum erumpis foras?" (Peltier, p.75, from the paragraph "Jesus morte damnatus").

30 See *The Harley Lyrics*, ed. G.L. Brook, 3rd edition (Manchester, 1964) pp.57-60.

31 *Religious Lyrics of the XIVth Century*, ed. Carleton Brown, 2nd edition (Oxford, 1952) p.2.

32 For the concept of a "meditating 'I'" in religious lyrics, see Wenzel, *Verses in Sermons*, pp.129-30.

33 *The English Religious Lyric in the Middle Ages* (Oxford, 1968) p.31.

34 This, and the subsequent lines from *St Mary of Egypt* and *All Souls*, are quoted from *The South English Legendary*, ed. C. D'Evelyn and Anna J. Mill, EETS 235-6 (1956), II, p.364, I, p.138, and II, p.470.

35 *The South English Nativity of Mary and Christ*, ed. Pickering, p.74, from where the subsequent quotation is also taken (pp.93-4).

THE PARLEMENT OF THE THRE AGES

By V.J. SCATTERGOOD

Though it is commonly agreed that the poem has passages of writing as attractive as any in the alliterative tradition, and though such passages are sometimes anthologised, *The Parlement of the Thre Ages*[1] is usually regarded as less than a complete success. Earlier critics, such as Sir Israel Gollancz, treated it as something which read like "a sort of summary of longer poems", or as a collection of conventional literary motifs loosely strung together.[2] J.P. Oakden found it "faulty in construction"[3] and Dorothy Everett saw "little sense of fitness or proportion" in its conduct.[4] More recent critics have echoed these views: D.J. Williams complains of "a lack of proportion, in particular that the Nine Worthies take up too much space",[5] and R.A. Waldron similarly remarks on "the looseness and lack of proportion" in the poem's construction.[6] Anne Kernan sees the device of "bracketing" set-pieces, signalling where they begin and where they end, as characteristic of the poet's art, and presents an elegant analysis of the constituent parts of the poem.[7] Of these constituent parts the lengthy section on the Nine Worthies irritates many readers,[8] but it is the relevance (or lack of it) of the hunting prologue which causes most difficulty. Constance Hieatt finds this poem (and *Wynnere and Wastoure*) "confusing", particularly since the matter of the prologue seems to bear no coherent relation to the matter of the vision: "This omission of the figure of the dreamer actively participating in his dream may have significant bearing on the less satisfactory qualities of the two poems. For example, the actions and reactions of the dreamers in . . . other poems serve as unifying devices, relating the dream to the preliminary material in a way which is sorely lacking in both these cases". She does admit, however, that hers may be an unfair estimate of the poem, and "if we could be more sure of the meaning of the prologue - that is, of its connection or lack of it, with the dream that follows - perhaps the dream would appear in a totally different light".[9]

It does not seem to me that the attractiveness of this poem lies in short passages of vivid writing, though these passages undeniably have their appeal. The poem's more lasting impact derives from a coherence of strategy, an acute verbal awareness, and a maturity of stance which I hope here to demonstrate.

I

Previous critics have suggested ways in which the prologue may

be read to provide a connection with the rest of the poem, but there is little agreement. As R.A. Waldron has demonstrated, the hunting prologue may be looked at in at least three ways: as "a kind of bait to the reader or listener, designed to engage his attention initially" so that subsequently he might be prepared to give attention to the less immediately attractive doctrine with which the poem ends, or "as a psychologically appropriate prelude to the dream", or as bearing a "thematic" relation to the material of the dream.[10] With the exception of H.L. Savage, who sought a biographical relation ("our poet is evidently a poacher"),[11] most critics have looked for a thematic appropriateness.

Several different symbolic interpretations have been offered but, curiously perhaps for a poem which is in parts so obviously non-naturalistic and allusive, none of these is entirely convincing. John Speirs goes to anthropology for a solution: "The dreamer . . . contemplates the three successive ages of his own - and everyman's - life. As the lawless green hunter or poacher - the Robin Hood or Summer King - of the prologue he is himself evidently still identifiable with the first of the three Ages". He also argues that killing a deer was a way of securing a vision (on analogy with Grail or Mabinogi legends) and a demonstration that the hero had arrived at manhood.[12] But there is nothing to connect the narrator with any anthropological figure: he covers himself and his crossbow with leaves simply as camouflage because he is intent "one stalkynge" (21); he wants the deer, not to prove his manhood, but to eat, hence his appraisal of it as "a coloppe for a kynge" (33), his testing of the meat (70-1), and the care he takes not to ruin any of it (81-2); and he slumbers because he is tired ("for slepeles" 101) and it is his worry ("dowte" 102) about being caught by a forester which produces his dream, not the killing of the deer itself. Constance Hieatt, on the other hand, draws attention to "the bestiaries' frequent association of deer with longevity and regeneration" which "may have something to do with the problem of age" and thus with the subject of the poem's debate. She quotes a twelfth-century bestiary that states that even stags of a hundred years of age show no signs of senility, and after eating snakes stags shed their coats and their old age with them, and that eating venison can make men immortal and not subject to fevers.[13] Some of these ideas certainly appear in Middle English poems.[14] But no precise use of them can be established here.

Nor do interpretations based on patristic exegesis illuminate the poem significantly. D.E. Lampe has used the associations of the flowers, birds, and animals mentioned in lines 8-20 to substantiate a reading in terms of the sins which beset man at the various stages of his life.[15] But symbolic explanations are unnecessary: the particular flowers, birds and animals are mentioned because they are part of the English landscape in Maytime. Nor does the hunting require a symbolic interpretation, though it receives one from Beryl Rowland. She interprets the ages of the disputants - 30, 60 and 100 - in terms of the common exegesis of the parable of the sower (Matthew xiii 3-8), ironically reversed: "The protagonists have sprung from the seed which fell on barren ground; their ages may represent degrees of perfection, but their activities reveal

how far they have fallen short and transgressed against God". And she reads the prologue back in these terms: "The action of the prologue is, in fact, an inversion of Christ's parable of the sower: a man goes forth to kill, not to give life".[15] The hunting activity in the prologue certainly appears to be illegal. And there was a well-established tradition which classed hunters as sinful men.[17] But the poet of *The Parlement of the Thre Ages* manifests no disapproval of hunting: his attitude is similar to that of the composers of hunting manuals (which parts of his poem closely resemble), that the killing and brittling of a stag is something which ought to be done efficiently and properly according to the best practices. The lines on hunting are perhaps best regarded as an example of what Geoffrey Shepherd calls "memorable instruction",[18] though a number of Middle English poems which use a hunt as a narrative device, turn eventually to the theme of death.[19]

The more empirical readings of *The Parlement of the Thre Ages* are on the whole more successful. Several critics, including D.J. Williams, propose a connection between the prologue and the dream in terms of a relation between the hunter and the disputants: "At first the connection between the hunting dreamer and the substance of his dream seems slight, unless we are to connect his activity with that of Youth. That connection is appropriate, but the dreamer also has something in common with Middle Age since his hunting is more practical in purpose . . ."[20] R.A. Waldron develops this, comparing the dreamer with Elde " . . . in the last few lines of the Prologue, as he sinks back on the sunny bank, his labours over, and falls asleep in the sun", and maintains " . . . it could be argued that in the three successive stages of his adventure he prefigures each age of the composite *Humanum Genus* . . ."[21] There is some truth in this, but the precise connections are difficult to establish. Though both hunt, the narrator is a poacher and Youthe a gentleman at one of his leisure activities. The narrator has no part in any of Youthe's other pastimes - jousting "Stoken in my stele-wede one my stede bakke" (200), or enjoying himself in courtly society with his arms about ladies, dancing or reading romances "Of kempes and of conquerors, of kynges full noblee" (251), revelling in the hall, or singing "coundythes and carolles" (254) or playing chess. A similar point may be made with reference to Medill Elde. Though it may be that both he and the narrator are "practical" to some degree, the poacher is not concerned with "rentes", "reches", "mukkyng", "marlelyng", "mendynge of howses" or any of Medill Elde's other activities (141-9). Nor is the poacher at all like Elde: he lies down not because he has been physically exhausted and ruined by the process of living (as Elde is, 154-5) but because he was heavy ("slome") for lack of sleep ("slepeles" 101).

Since it is difficult to sustain the view that the author intended the poacher to be identified with any of the disputants in the debate, it is perhaps worth considering that he intended precisely the opposite - to make him the dissociated, impartial observer of the debate, involved, if at all, in the whole question under discussion, but not too closely with any one aspect of it. Very little is known about the narrator except that he is a poacher,

that he has a crossbow, and a dog. About the physical appearance of Youthe there is quite a lot: he was well-made "balghe in the breste and brode in the sholdirs", long-limbed, and shapely (112-15). Medill Elde "rowmly was schapyn" (137); and Elde "croked and courbede" was white-bearded and white-haired, "ballede and blynde", "totheles and tenefull" (154-9). But about the poacher's physical appearance there is nothing. Similarly, Youthe was "gerede alle in grene, alle with golde by-weuede" (122), Medill Elde was "alle in rosette" (137), and Elde "alle in blake" (153); but the poet does not say what colours the poacher wore, only that he covered himself with leaves. In addition, the three ages are characterised by their postures - Youthe "on ane heghe horse" (111), Medill Elde "in his sete" (136), and Elde "lenyde on his syde" (152) - but none of these is typically that of the poacher. Once he is described as sitting (98-100) and once it is implied that he has been lying down (655) but usually - and unlike the three ages - he is on his feet. And, of course, nothing is said on the crucial matter of the poacher's age. Indeed, it looks as though the author wished to stress the narrator's apartness from the disputants. And perhaps making him a poacher is part of that strategy. The three ages are firmly located within contemporary society. As R.A. Waldron points out, Youthe is " . . . a courtier, while Medill Elde is a business man, one of the middle class . . . and Elde could complete the three estates as representative of the spirituality."[22] But the poacher exists apart, outside the law, and uninvolved in any of their specific concerns.

But though the poacher is not to be associated narrowly with any of the disputants, he is involved in the subject of the debate as a whole, and it seems to me that the concerns of the prologue and those of the dream are essentially similar. "The progression of the poem is essentially thematic rather than narrative", says Anne Kernan, and proposes that it should be regarded as "an ordered series of variations on the theme of mortality".[23] John Speirs puts this position more trenchantly: "The pageant he [i.e. the narrator] witnesses and the flyting he overhears in his dream produce a salutary recognition of his own mortality. The poem thus establishes a wise attitude to life - involving a recognition of death - by presenting an inclusive view of the human condition. The man's delight in the exercise and skill of deer-stalking and in wild nature, which seems itself to share and utter his delight, conveys the Pride of Life experience; and this is the cunning prelude to the debate of the Three Ages of Man and the Contemplation of Life in its relation to ultimate Age and Death. It is sophisticated art indeed. There is a compelling emotional logic of events in this poem . . ."[24] With much of this there is no reason to disagree. But valuable additional insights into the poem are provided by R.A. Peck who characterises the hunter as "careful" and also draws attention to the "elaborate defences" of the stag.[25] It seems to me that the poem is about the temporary nature and the precariousness of living, and particularly about the transitoriness of those things which enhance the process of living - joy, satisfaction, ease, and a delight in physical and intellectual achievement. The narrator's experiences in the prologue and the argument

he dreams about teach him the meaning of mortality, and alert him to his own human insecurity.

II

These subjects are skilfully raised at the beginning of the poem. The opening consists of a conventional[26] Maytime description which could be endlessly paralleled. But there is an insistence on the temporal setting of the poem ("monethe of Maye" 1, "sesone of somere" 2, "as Dryghtyn the day droue frome þe heuen" 6) which may not appear to be important, but which becomes so as the poem develops. The narrator is out early in a wood and his senses are so alive to the attractiveness of his surroundings that his reason for being there, so casually introduced, is easy to overlook:

> . . . I went to the wodde my werdes to dreghe,
> In-to þe schawes my-selfe a shotte me to gete
> At ane hert or ane hynde, happen as it myghte . . .
> (3-5)

It is very easy also to miss the resonances of the phrase "my werdes to dreghe". On one level it means simply "to try my luck" at poaching a deer; but on another it suggests "to take a chance", which he is doing, as it transpires, by being there as a poacher; and on a third it suggests "to see what my fate will be", and his dream will demonstrate this to him.[27]

But here the subject is not developed or followed up. The description resumes until, some dozen lines later, another discordant note is struck:

> Hertys and hyndes one hillys þay gouen,
> The foxe and the filmarte þay fledde to þe erthe;
> The hare hurkles by hawes & harde thedir dryves,
> And ferkes faste to hir fourme & fatills hir to sitt.
> (17-20)

Contrary to what Speirs maintains, "wild nature" does not entirely "share and utter" the poacher's "delight".[28] The breaking of day, which gladdens the birds, brings danger for animals likely to be hunted - as all these are, for one reason or another. There is danger in particular for one stag which wanders too close to where the leaf-covered poacher is concealed, a splendid animal "borely and brode and of body grete" (32), with fine antlers. A "soar" grazes to windward.[29] He is nervous and suspicious, keeping watch for the stag lest anyone "in his slepe with sleghte scholde hym dere" (36); he "woke & warned him" (35) and "waittede wittyly aboute" (46). The stag too is alert: "he stotayde and stelkett and starede full brode" (51). And alertness, it seems, is a condition of survival. It is when he feels secure that he relaxes and bends to his food, and it is precisely at this point that the arrow from the poacher's crossbow hits him:

> . . . at the laste he loutted doun & laughte till his mete;

And I hallede to the hokes and the hert smote.
(52-3)

For the stag there remains only brief flight and harsh death: "Dede als a dore-nayle doun was he fallen" (65). After this he becomes simply a carcase under the poacher's brittling knife.

The abrupt death of the stag - at one moment physically splendid with all its senses alert and shortly afterwards a lifeless dismembered carcase - obliquely introduces the subject of the poem. It is true that the author states no moral at this point and true that the remainder of the poem concerns the human condition, but essentially it deals with the same theme - the splendour and precariousness of living. Throughout the stalking episode the narrator is both physically and mentally stretched, but retains control over himself and his equipment. He proceeds skilfully ("wiesly" 40) and quietly ("stilly" 41). But when he has the stag in his sights the "soar" moves and the poacher has to undergo again the agonising process of waiting, and steel himself against distraction lest "Alle my layke hade bene loste þat I hade longe waytede" (49). But his bow-shot is accurate; the stag is efficiently located; and the brittling is done correctly, quickly, and carefully so that none of the meat is spoiled:

I slitte hym full sleghely and slyppede in my fyngere
Lesse the poynte scholde perche the pawnche or the guttys.
(81-2)

It is only after the stag has been cut up that another dimension of the poacher's need for speed and adroitness emerges plainly. What he is doing is illegal and dangerous.[30] He is swift and careful because he is frightened. Because he cannot afford to be discovered and caught, he hides the meat so that "no fostere of the fee scholde fynde it ther-aftir" (94) and so that "no hunte scholde it hent ne haue it in sighte" (96). Then he gets away from the kill: "I foundede faste there-fro for ferde to be wryghede . . ." (97). On a purely naturalistic level the narrator's sleep, though surprising, is plausible, for he has risen early and expended considerable physical and nervous energy in stalking, killing, brittling, and hiding the deer. This accomplished, he feels confident he can relax. He sits in the warm sun and falls asleep. But his predicament is uncertain, and it is this uncertainty, "dowte" (102), that causes him to dream his "full dreghe sweuynn" (102). What his dream will teach, amongst other things, is that relaxation is inappropriate, for the human condition is fraught with uncertainty.

The poacher's dream opens with the statement that "thre thro men" argued ("threpden" 104, "moted" 105) and it appears that the audience is being offered a debate. The disputants are described in static, pictorial terms. Each in his way is perfect, in that each embodies those characteristics which most strikingly declare what he is meant to represent. Each is a separate entity, differentiated in physical appearance, dress, posture, accoutrements,[31] and concern. And when Youthe and Medill Elde begin to argue, their differences are sharpened. The argument is about life-styles and

the sets of values which sustain them.[32] Youthe believes in love and the deeds of arms done in the service of love (181), which Medill Elde says is "fantome and foly" (184) because it is not grounded in economic practicalibity: "For alle thy ryalle araye renttis hase þou none" (186). He recommends that Youthe should seek to acquire what is useful instead of that which is splendid and decorative:

> Bye the stirkes with thi stede and stalles thaym make:
> Thi brydell of brent golde wolde bullokes the gete;
> The pryce of thi perrye wolde purches the londes . . .
> (190-2)

Youthe rejects this suggestion as "feble" (195). He points out the limits of Medill Elde's materialism: "Bot thi golde and thi gude thou hase no god ells" (196), and in a long, impassioned speech he reaffirms his faith in the aristocratic life with its jousting, hawking, reading of romances, dancing and so on (195-260). He delights in the variety of experience, in energetic physical activity, in doing things properly (e.g. 240), in the whole ordered elegance of this way of living. Medill Elde, unmoved, takes this to be foolish, and, indeed, thinks he is himself foolish to argue with Youthe: "Fole es that with foles delys" (264).[33]

Formally this is a debate in that the disputants speak in turn and disagree, but it is a debate of a rather peculiar kind: neither disputant takes up the other's points; neither argues rationally or deceitfully; neither alters his ground. Nor can they change: their positions are not established by rational argument and cannot be destroyed by it. Medill Elde is right, in fact, to recognise the futility of the debate: "flyte we no lengare" (264). But neither Youthe nor Medill Elde seems to realise why the debate is futile, though it is implicit in what each represents and in what each says. The debate is pointless because they both argue as if their positions were unchangeable, even though their names and stated ages set them in a temporal sequence, and even though they recognise that they live in time and are to some degree conditioned by that fact (258-60, 262).

Elde's magisterial[34] intervention renders explicit the non-static nature of the disputants and makes their debate redundant. He does not say he will refute them, only that he will put an end to their dispute: " . . . stynte ȝour stryffe and stillen ȝour threpe" (268). And this he does by insisting on a broader perspective, by twice setting the three ages in a linear temporal relation to each other. Presenting himself as an example (269) or "mirror" (290) he shows that he incorporates all that Youthe, Medill Elde, and Elde are or have been. And this is reinforced on a formal level in that his speech includes ideas and phrases which have gone before:

> And ther-to ȝonge and ȝape, and ȝouthe was his name
> (134)
> While I was ȝonge in my ȝouthe and ȝape of my dedys
> (270)

His renttes and his reches rekened he full ofte (141)
Reches and renttes were ryfe to my-seluen (282)

Of mukkyng, of marlelyng, and mendynge of howses (142)
Than I mukkede and marlede and made vp my howses (279)

Of purches of ploughe-londes, of parkes full faire,
Of profettis of his pasturs . . . (145-6)
And purcheste me ploughe-londes and pastures full noble
(280)

Croked and courbede, encrampeschett for elde;
Alle disfygured was his face, and fadit his hewe,
His berde and browes were blanchede full whitte.
(154-6)
And alle disfegurede my face and fadide my hewe,
Bothe my browis and my berde blawnchede full whitte-
And when he sotted my syghte, than sowed myn hert-
Croked me, courbed me, encrampeschet myn hondes.
(284-7)

And after the example of himself, and the instances of eminent men whom death has taken, appears another section demonstrating the relation of the ages:

Thou man in thi medill elde, hafe mynde whate I saye!
I am thi sire and thou my sone, the sothe for to telle,
And he the sone of thi-selfe, þat sittis one the stede,
For Elde es sire of Midill Elde and Midill Elde of ȝouthe.
(649-52)

And the logical implication of each of these sequences is a recognition of the inevitability of death (292, 653-4).

Elde shows that Youthe and Medill Elde were mistaken in implicitly assuming that their positions were unalterable. He shows that they are subject to time and that they should logically come to terms with the fact of death. Elde is concerned with death in general, but the particular aspect of it which he emphasises is its paradoxical certainty and uncertainty. Since death is inevitable it must come, but it is given to no human being to know when or how it will come. A powerful expression of this uncertainty appears at lines 293-4, where the poet makes use of the terminology of the "three last things":

I ne wot wiche daye ne when ne whate tyme he comes,
Ne whedir-wardes, ne whare, ne whatte to do aftire.

At 635-6 the paradox is stated as such:

. . . noghte es sekire to ȝoure-selfe in certayne bot dethe,
And he es so vncertayne that sodaynly he comes.[35]

This part of Elde's argument warns that any feelings of security

which human beings may have are seriously misplaced.

His *exempla*, which are largely drawn from history, reinforce this notion but they do not simply repeat it. Though the Nine Worthies are usually cited to fortify arguments that death takes everyone,[36] and though that is an important reason for their appearance here, they are also used to demonstrate something altogether more precise. Since they were essentially warriors, "the doghtyeste of dedis in thaire dayes tyme", their deaths show that "doghetynes when dede comes ne dare noghte habyde" (582-3). And each of the other sets of *exempla* also are specifically directed. The list of "wyghes þat were wyseste" (584) proves that "dethe wondes for no witt to wende were hym lykes" (611); and the list of "the prowdeste in presse þat paramoures loueden" (612) proves that death puts an end to pride and love too. And after his *exempla* Elde, in his familiar summarising manner, clinches his argument by repeating lines:

> Sythen doughtynes when dede comes ne dare noghte habyde,
> Ne dethe wondes for no witt to wende where hym lykes,
> And ther-to paramours and pride puttes he full lowe . . . .
> Me thynke þe wele of this werlde worthes to noghte.
> (631-7)

What his *exempla* stress is not simply that death comes to all, but that those things in which men might rightly take pride - valour, wisdom, love - are rendered as nothing by death. Since this is the case it follows that achievement is vain, because not lasting, and that pride in achievement like assumptions of security, is misplaced. And after this the predictable moral advice follows: since "alle es vayne and vanytes and vanyte is alle" (640) it behoves men to amend their "mysse", to repent and look to the health of their souls.[37]

Elde is as good as his word that he will put an end to the arguments of Youthe and Medill Elde, for his self-consciously long (585, 613) speech is effectively the last word. Thorlac Turville-Petre asks whether Elde's "statements [are] to be accepted without question".[38] But in medieval debates, whoever argued his opponent or opponents into silence was held to be the victor, and to Elde's authoritative exposition there is no reply.[39] He demonstrates conclusively that Youthe and Medill Elde are wrong to assume that their positions are static, or that the achievements in which they take pride are at all lasting. But the poacher has heard Elde's arguments too, and, since he is a mortal man like Youthe and Medill Elde, he has reason to ponder their implications. In fact, he has more reason, for he has already seen, in his own killing of the stag, an example of the way in which death can in an unwary moment destroy something in the splendid fullness of its life, despite all the precautions it might take; and now he has heard an authoritative, well-supported speech on the folly of putting a secure trust in human achievement. Despite this the poacher, though he is in a precarious position precisely because he is a poacher, is relaxed in sleep[40] satisfied at having stalked, killed, brittled and hidden a deer. The outcome of the dream is relevant to the poacher, for he has forgotten, in the enjoyment of his success, his own human

insecurity. And it seems to be the implications of what Elde has said which wake him out of his sleep.

As frequently in alliterative poems of this period, the end recalls the beginning: the opening line is picked up in "In the monethe of Maye thies mirthes me tydde . . ." (660). This gives the poem a rounded, elegant neatness. But it also emphasises the temporal setting of the poem, which is important in terms of its meaning. In the fiction of the poem a considerable amount of time has passed since the beginning, and by the end it is evening not morning: " . . . the sone was sett and syled full loughe" (658). The poacher, it seems, has been altered by his experiences of the day. Though he is recognisably the same person with the same preoccupations, there are slight but significant differences between the poacher of the prologue and the poacher of the end of the poem. These differences are a measure of the wisdom the poem has to communicate, and the poacher's reaction to his dream provides a subtle, understated conclusion to the poem. Elde's final line, "Dethe dynges one my dore, I dare no lengare byde" (654), jolts his complacency. That he sees its relevance to his own situation is plain from the way in which he picks up Elde's word "lengare" in his own reaction: "when I had lenged and layne a full longe while . . ." (655). Not only the adjective "longe" but the cognate verb "lenged" both suggest that the poacher is more aware than he was previously of the temporal setting in which he and all men live. Because he realises that a day of his life has passed the poacher can see himself in relation to his dream, and can appreciate its relevance to him.[41] The debate of the three ages dealt with the span of a human lifetime, Elde's *exempla* brought to bear the perspective of historical time, and both made the same point: because time passes, circumstances change, and thus inert self-satisfaction, however soundly based in splendid achievement, is foolish. So it is fitting the poacher should resume the alertness he had in the prologue: " . . . I wakkened ther-with and waytted me vmbe" (657) - a point the poet emphasises by reusing words used earlier ("wayttede" 49, "wayte" 99). For this poacher in particular, but for any man to some degree, alertness is necessary for survival. The dream about death's inevitability and unexpectedness alerts the poacher to a realisation of who and where he is. And just as the noisy approach of death makes it impossible for Elde to "byde", so the sound of the "bogle one a banke . . . blowen full lowde" (656) jolts the poacher out of his complacency. Whether this is to be read literally as a forester's hunting horn, or symbolically as death's trumpet is not clear.[42] After such a dream the awakening poacher could be forgiven for investing the literal with some more threatening significance. But, however it is to be taken, it connotes danger, and prompts the poacher to throw off his sleep and renew his activity. Though death is ultimately unavoidable it is as well to try to avoid it as far as possible: "I founded appon fote", says the poacher, "and ferkede to-warde townn" (659), just as, and for something of the same reason, he had "foundede faste" (97) in the prologue from the scene of the kill.

The poacher leaves the wood with a sharper sense of his own existence. After killing the stag he had relaxed into complacency,

assuming (like Youthe and Medill Elde) that his condition was static and unalterable - assumptions which Elde incontrovertibly destroys. The poacher says nothing directly about his dream; and this is apt, for there is nothing to say: one does not avoid danger by talking about it. His closing prayer:

> . . . dere Drightyne this daye dele vs of thi blysse,
> And Marie, þat is mylde qwene, amende vs of synn,
> (664-5)

seems to have been suggested by Elde's arguments for the need for penance (641-8). But for the rest the narrator understands well enough what he has to do, which is to be alert, to keep his wits about him, to shake off his sleepy complacency, and avoid danger as far as he can. He has to stand up, be a man, and come to terms with his human insecurity.

NOTES

1 All references and quotations are from the Thornton version (British Library MS Additional 31042) printed by M.Y. Offord, *The Parlement of the Thre Ages*, EETS 246 (1959). Selections from the poem appear in H.S. Bennett, *England from Chaucer to Caxton* (Cambridge, 1928) pp.92-7 (11.1-101); *Life on an English Manor* (Cambridge, 1937) pp.270-3 (11.1-61); *The Age of Chaucer* ed. Boris Ford (Penguin, 1954) pp.302-14 (11.1-299, 631-65), *The Oxford Book of Medieval English Verse*, ed. Celia and Kenneth Sisam (Oxford, 1970) pp.201-4 (11.1-53).

2 *Wynnere and Wastoure and The Parlement of the Thre Ages*, Roxburghe Club (London, 1897); *The Parlement of the Thre Ages* (London, 1915), sig. A viii (from which I quote).

3 *Alliterative Poetry in Middle English*, 2 vols. (Manchester, 1930, 1935), II, p.54.

4 *Essays on Middle English Literature* ed. P.M. Kean (Oxford, 1955) p.51.

5 "The Alliterative Revival", in *The Middle Ages* ed. W.F. Bolton (London, 1970) pp.119-20.

6 "The Prologue to *The Parlement of the Thre Ages*", *Neuphilologische Mitteilungen* 73 (1972) pp.786-94.

7 "Theme and Structure in *The Parlement of the Thre Ages*", *Neuphilologische Mitteilungen* 75 (1974) pp.253-78. See the similar, more general, remarks of Geoffrey Shepherd, "The Nature of Alliterative Poetry in Later Medieval English", *Proceedings of the British Academy* 56 (1970) pp.57-76.

8 See A.C. Spearing's brief but trenchant remarks on the "shoddy formalism" of this section (*Medieval Dream Poetry*, Cambridge, 1976, pp.134-7).

9 *The Realism of Dream Visions* (The Hague, 1967), Chapter 8.

10 *Op.cit.*, pp.789-94. See also Spearing *op.cit.*, p.136.

11 "Notes on the Prologue of *The Parlement of the Thre Ages*", *Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 29 (1930) pp.74-82.

12 *"Wynnere and Wastoure & The Parlement of the Thre Ages"*, *Scrutiny* 17 (1950) pp.221-52; reprinted in *Medieval English Poetry: the Non-Chaucerian Tradition* (London, 1957) pp.289-301 (from which I quote).

13 *Op.cit.*, Chapter 8. For a summary of the background to these ideas see Marcelle Thiébaux, *The Stag of Love. the Chase in Medieval Literature* (Ithaca and London, 1974) pp.40-3. Anne Kernan argues that "The poem bears no hint of the symbolic values attributed to the stag in these works (i.e. bestiaries)" (*op.cit.*, p.257).

14 For example, *Mum and the Sothsegger* ed. Mabel Day and R. Steele, EETS 199 (1934), III, 11.26ff.

15 "The Poetic Strategy of *The Parlement of the Thre Ages*", *The Chaucer Review* 7 (1972) pp.173-83.

16 "The Three Ages of *The Parlement of the Thre Ages*", *The Chaucer Review* 9 (1974) pp.342-52. Anne Kernan quotes two exegetic readings of the parable of the sower, but concludes: "Neither of these traditional meanings seems to have any relevance to *The Parlement*, however" (*op.cit.*, p.265).

17 See Rudolph Willard, "Chaucer's Text that Seith That Hunters Ben Nat Hooly Men", *Texas Studies in English* (1947) pp.209-51, for the complex background to this idea.

18 *Op.cit.*, p.59.

19 The most striking example, perhaps, is the version of the legend of "the three living and the three dead" attributed to John Audelay, *Poems* ed. E.K. Whiting, EETS 184 (1930) No.54, which opens with a boar-hunt. But both *The Awntyrs off Arthure at the Terne Wathelyne* and Chaucer's *Book of the Duchess* conform to this type. For some good comments on the way the hunters are themselves hunted see Philippa Tristram, *Figures of Life and Death in Medieval English Literature* (London, 1976) pp.164-5 and for a graphic version Plate 26. See also Thiébaux *op.cit.*, pp.66-70.

20 *Op.cit.*, p.119.

21 *Op.cit.*, p.794.

22 *Op.cit.*, p.788. For some details on the fashionableness of Youthe's dress see R.E. Lewis, "The Date of *The Parlement of the Thre Ages*", *Neuphilologische Mitteilungen* 69 (1968) pp.380-90.

23 *Op.cit.*, p.278.

24 *Op.cit.*, p.289.

25 "The Careful Hunter in the Parlement of the Thre Ages", *ELH* 39 (1972) pp.333-41. Though my conclusions differ somewhat from Peck's I am much indebted to this fine and sensitive reading of the poem.

26 See D.E. Lampe *op.cit.*, pp.174-5 for an analysis.

27 See *Middle English Dictionary* ed. Hans Kurath and Sherman M. Kuhn (Ann Arbor, 1956 -), under *drien* v. (2) 1, 3(a) for the various senses of this phrase.

28 *Op.cit.*, p.289.

29 A "soar" (Latin *saurus*, OF *saur*, *sor*) is a buck or hart in its fourth year. On the habit of an old stag's having a younger companion which acted as a sort of squire see *The Master of Game* ed. W.A. and F. Baillie-Grohman (London, 1904), "And somtyme a greet hert hath anoþer felawe and is called his squiere, for he is withe hym which done as he wil, and þere þei will abyde al that sesoun so that þei be notte lette, into þe laste eende of August" (16).

30 The normal punishment for poaching was a fine or imprisonment: see John Manwood, *A Treatise and Discourse of the Lawes of the Forest* . . . (1598), XVIII, 9. For actual cases see the interesting collection in *Select Pleas of the Forest*, ed. G.J. Turner, Selden Society 13 (1899). It is clear from some of these cases that simply by having a bow and arrows or a dog within

the forest a man made himself liable to prosecution. Concealing venison in the way this poacher does was also evidently frequent.

31 Youthe has a "hauke appon hande" (111), Medill Elde has money-bags (139), and Elde has "bedis in his hande" (153) and says his prayers. On the significance of these things see Thorlac Turville-Petre, "The Ages of Man in *The Parlement of the Thre Ages*", *Medium Ævum* 46 (1977) pp.66-76.

32 Comparison has often been made with the argument in *Wynnere and Wastoure* ll.221-455.

33 Proverbial, see B.J. and H.W. Whiting, *Proverbs, Sentences and Proverbial Phrases* (Cambridge, Mass., 1968), F 425, and compare C 465 and F 422, 450. Medill Elde is using the familiar debating device of seeking to substantiate a point by means of the authority of a saying.

34 "The dream vision presents what the medieval audience would have recognised as a *quodlibet*; the debate between Youthe and Medill Elde serving as the abbreviated *disputatio* (an improvised exchange between two students) and Elde's long response as the *determinatio* (the master's reprise and logical ordering of the questions and arguments raised by his students)", (D.E. Lampe *op.cit.*, p.182).

35 With lines 293-4 compare the thirteenth-century verse:

Wanne ich þenche þinges þre
ne mai [i] neure bliþe be:
þat on is ich sal awe,
þat oþer is ich ne wot wilk day.
þat þridde is mi meste kare,
i ne woth nevre wuder i sal fare.

(Carleton Brown, *English Lyrics of the Thirteenth Century*, Oxford, 1932, No.12). With lines 635-6 compare St Anselm's paradox: "Nihil certius morte, nihil hora mortis incertius" (*Meditatio* vii). The concept had proverbial status in Middle English; see Whiting *op.cit.* D 96 for a vast collection of examples. On the tradition of the "three last things" see Rosemary Woolf, *English Religious Lyric in the Middle Ages* (Oxford, 1968) pp.85-8.

36 Compare *Morte Arthure* ll.3406-45; and see R.S. Loomis, "Verses on the Nine Worthies", *Modern Philology* 15 (1917) pp.19-27; J.H. Roberts, "The Nine Worthies", *Modern Philology* 19 (1922) pp.297-305. Gollancz, *op.cit.*, Appendix IX, prints a poem on the "vanity" theme which lists the Nine Worthies.

37 The famous text on "vanity" is from Ecclesiastes i.2, xii.8. For the relation between this text and the three ages see particularly the fifteenth-century lyric beginning, "O vanyte off vanytes & all is vanite . . ." especially the lines:

lo! here comys ȝouth with myrth & plays Ioly,
With-outen thouȝt ore care, fader & moderles,
Bot medyll Age thinkis þat it was foly
And ner peynes hym-selue with werdly besynes,
Bot all his labour is to grete ryches -
Than commys Age & seys þat he must dyȝe,
Than he knaw ȝought & all was vanyte.

(Carleton Brown, *Religious Lyrics of the Fifteenth Century*, Oxford, 1952, No.151 ll.64-70). For the influence on the poem of "the spirit and form of Ecclesiastes and the commentaries on it" see Anne Kernan, *op.cit.*, p.276.

38 *Op.cit.*, p.74. This is the point of view also of Speirs " . . . the total wisdom of the poem cannot be said to be exclusively that of Elde" (*op.cit.*, p.301).

39 "Whoever silenced his opponent, by forcing him into a position that he cannot argue himself out of, gains victory in the debate", (*The Owl and the Nightingale*, ed. E.G. Stanley, London and Edinburgh, 1960, p.27). In that poem compare lines 391-410, 665-6; see also *A Dispute between a Good Man and the Devil*, ll.949-53 and *The Boke of Cupide*, l.209.

40 In hunting manuals, and elsewhere too, appears the idea that the sport is a sovereign remedy against sleep and idleness; see Thiébaux *op.cit.*, pp.76-80. But the poet appears to make no use of this idea.

41 For the analogy between the passing of a day and human life compare the fifteenth-century lyric "As I went one my playing . . ." especially the lines:

> That one þe morrov when hit is fayre & clere,
> After none hit wendys awaye,
> And commyth to the nyȝt as hit was ere:
> This word ys but a daye:
> Soo for ryȝt all owre lewyng heyre;
> ffrow chyldwood vnto mannys degre,
> Owre enddyng drawyt nere and nere -
> This word ys but a wannyte.

(Carleton Brown, *Religious Lyrics of the Fifteenth Century*, Oxford, 1952, No.147, ll.9-16). It is notable that this poem is on the theme of "vanity".

42 Compare *ibid*, No.149, l.21: "I sey no more but be ware of ane horne". See also *The Castle of Perseverance*, l.2806; *Everyman*, l.843.

LANGLAND'S POETRY: SOME NOTES IN CRITICAL ANALYSIS

By A.C. SPEARING

My choice of subject is governed partly, but only partly, by nostalgia. When I was working on *Piers Plowman* in Cambridge under Elizabeth Salter's supervision in the late 1950's and early 1960's, I was convinced that one of the most urgent needs if Langland studies were to make further progress was not so much scholarly as critical: it was for a closer and more sensitive reading of the texture of Langland's verse. In Cambridge at that time the tradition of "practical criticism" established by Mansfield Forbes and I.A. Richards still dominated English studies; F.R. Leavis was still lecturing on "critical analysis"; and yet medieval poetry remained virtually untouched by the techniques of "close reading". As I saw it then, "the criticism of medieval literature is still largely in a pre-twentieth-century phrase",[1] and I was determined to do something about it, at least so far as Langland was concerned. Looking back now, nearly a quarter of a century later, I realize that, for all the fine sensitivity of her own response to medieval poetry, Elizabeth Salter probably did not fully share my enthusiasm for "practical criticism" of fourteenth-century literature, and later in her own career, with her deepening engagement in meticulous literary-historical scholarship, she would have shared it still less; but, with characteristic grace and generosity, she gave me every encouragement to do what I could. As it turned out, the Ph.D. dissertation on which I was working grew and grew without ever being completed, and, though I published some work comparing the C-text of *Piers Plowman* with the B-text which involved a sort of "close reading", "Langland's kind of poetry"[2] proved more elusive of analysis and definition than I had hoped.

The situation now may seem scarcely favourable for a renewed attempt. Twenty years ago I was already aware that, if "close reading" could be done on medieval poetry, it must not be directed by the expectations of density of texture, subtle precision of meaning, and richness of metaphor associated with a critical technique that had grown from the study of English poetry of later periods, from Shakespeare to Eliot. Nowadays it is clear that "practical criticism" itself is not the natural and innocently unprejudiced technique that it could still seem in 1960; we cannot practise it without implying a theory, without becoming involved, albeit unconsciously, in issues of cultural and even political analysis and the phenomenology of reading. Nevertheless, it remains the case that little close attention has been given to Langland's practice of words, and that this is a situation fraught with danger

for the interpretation of his poem. In particular, a very large amount of *Piers Plowman* study involves attempts to interpret his allegory unsupported by any understanding of the roots of that allegory in the way he uses words. No amount of supplying of the historical and intellectual context of Langland's work is likely to be profitable in the absence of a concern with his habits as a poet, a meddler with makings. After all, Ymaginatif's accusation - Langland's self-accusation - was that he did *not* spend all his time saying his psalter, but instead occupied himself with composing poetry. One would never guess that from reading much published work about *Piers Plowman*. I persuade myself, therefore, that I am not merely being nostalgic in offering some small-scale attempts at detailed analysis of Langland's verbal practice. Moreover, in one respect at least, the situation has become more favourable for such an endeavour. When I was attempting to establish that the C-text consistently intensified the B-text's use of verbal repetition, I realized that, by relying on Skeat's editions, I might unwittingly find myself discussing "a difference between specific manuscripts" and establishing only that "the scribe of Huntington Library MS HM 137 was, in a minor way, a creative artist".[3] So indeed it has apparently proved; but the new editions of *Piers Plowman* which indicate this - the B-texts of Kane and Donaldson and of Schmidt, the C-text of Pearsall - also provide a sounder basis for another attempt. The words that Langland actually wrote may be in many instances lost beyond recall, but the massive labours of textual scholars, even when account is taken of occasional eccentricities of conjecture, have undoubtedly brought us closer to them than anyone has been since the fourteenth century.

The first passage I wish to examine is chosen for its ordinariness: passages illustrating the same methods and habits of composition might be found almost anywhere in *Piers Plowman*. It is the closing section of Passus I of the B-text, in which Lady Holichirche comes to the end of the speech she has made in response to the Dreamer's request to her to tell him not about worldly treasure but about the means to save his soul. The theme of her answer is that Treuthe is the highest treasure, and that Treuthe in man means love - love in action, shown above all in giving to others.

For though ye be trewe of youre tonge and treweliche wynne,
180 And as chaste as a child that in chirche wepeth,
But if ye loven leelly and lene the povere,
Of swich good as God sent goodliche parteth,
Ye have na moore merite in Masse ne in houres
Than Malkyn of hire maydenhede, that no man desireth.
185 For James the gentile jugged in hise bokes
That feith withouten feet is feblere than nought,
And as deed as a dorenail but if the dedes folwe:
Fides sine operibus mortua est &c.
Forthi chastite withouten charite worth cheyned in helle;
It is as lewed as a lampe that no light is in.
190 Manye chapeleyns arn chaste, ac charite is aweye;
Are none hardere than hii whan hii ben avaunced:

Unkynde to hire kyn and to alle Cristene,
Chewen hire charite and chiden after moore -
Swich chastite withouten charite worth cheyned in helle.
195 Manye curatours kepen hem clene of hire bodies;
Thei ben acombred with coveitise, thei konne noght out crepe,
So harde hath avarice yhasped hem togideres.
And that is no truthe of the Trinite, but trecherie of helle,
And lernynge to lewed men the latter for to dele.
200 For thise ben wordes writen in the Euaungelie:
'*Date, et dabitur vobis* - for I deele yow alle.
And that is the lok of love that leteth out my grace,
To conforten the carefulle acombred with synne.'
Love is leche of lif and next Oure Lord selve,
205 And also the graithe gate that goth into heven.
Forthi I seye as I seide er by sighte of the textes:
Whan alle tresors ben tried, Treuthe is the beste.
Now have I told thee what truthe is - that no tresor is bettre -
I may no lenger lenge thee with; now loke thee Oure Lord!
(B I 179-209)[4]

These lines are to a large extent an amplification of the text quoted from the Epistle of James, chapter 2: Faith without works is dead. The whole of the second half of that chapter is concerned with driving home this simple yet hard doctrine, which it states three times over (verses 17, 20, 26) - faith without works *is dead* - and Langland's own method of writing here has much in common with that of the epistle, being simple, repetitive, and enforced with concrete *exempla*. It is the method of much of *Piers Plowman*, admirably described by Elizabeth Salter herself in the chapter on "The Art of *Piers Plowman*" in her *Piers Plowman - An Introduction*. There she notes the absence from *Piers Plowman* of "high rhetoric", the diction "simpler, more prosaic" than that of other alliterative poems, the "almost unbelievable naturalness in vocabulary and rhythm", the "dramatic freedom of phrasing", the reliance on *figurae verborum* involving different kinds of verbal repetition, and the "graphic directness . . . of the popular preacher" in the choice of simile and metaphor.[5] One may well be puzzled at first to see how Langland can possibly achieve poetry by using such methods.

The language is that of everyday life, though not by any means the *cherles termes* of low life: there are plenty of educated words such as *merite*, *chapeleyns*, *avaunced*, *curatours*, *acombred*, and so on. But there are no examples here of the diction peculiar to alliterative poetry: compared with any extract from, say, *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, this passage is notably plain and ordinary in its diction, not far distant, one may suppose, from prose or educated speech. *Trewe of . . . tonge* (179) is a commonplace collocation in Middle English; *as deed as a dorenail* (187) is illustrated by *The Middle English Dictionary* only from alliterative poems, including the earlier *William of Palerne*, but its survival as a cliché in modern colloquial English suggests that it may also have been a common tag in fourteenth-century speech. In many lines, the words that carry the alliteration are already linked in sense

and etymology, and must therefore have required little ingenuity or effort of imagination to choose. Examples are: *trewe . . . trewe-liche* (179), *good . . . goodliche* (182), *unkynde . . . kyn* (192), *gate . . . gooth* (205), *seye . . . seide* (206), *lenger lenge* (209). The sequence *lernynge . . . lewed* (199) offers only a slight grammatical variation on the familiar pair of opposites, *lered/lewed*. Line 194 is an all but verbatim repetition of line 188. The same sound is used for alliteration in many different lines: six lines use *l-* (181, 189, 199, 202, 204, 209); five lines use *ch-* (180, 188, 190, 193, 194); four lines use *t-* (179, 198, 207, 208); and four use *c/k-* (192, 195, 196, 203). Yet these repeated sounds do not seem to be there for some expressive purpose, as for example in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* 1178-1207, a stanza in which the nine lines (out of thirty) alliterating on *l-* clearly help to evoke the quiet, stealthy atmosphere of the bedchamber by contrast with the violent noise and movement of the previous hunting scene. Nor are they there to display the poet's virtuosity or to mark off specific sections of the poem, as for example in many passages in *Morte Arthure* where the poet "hits on the idea of running groups of lines on one alliterative letter when describing episodes of violence and excitement".[6] In this *Piers Plowman* passage, it is worth noting how the continuation of *m-* alliteration over lines 183 and 184 gives a special cumulative emphasis or "attack" to the derisive sentiment being expressed (and perhaps something similar is true of lines 195-6); but apart from that the repetition of alliterative sounds seems to be merely the concomitant of an emphasis diffused throughout the passage on certain ideas and a certain message.

Specific words are repeated several times in the positions marked out by stress and alliteration: *charite*, *chast(ite)*, *trew(th)*, and so on. Repetition of this kind, as Elizabeth Salter noted,[7] is a characteristic feature of the art of the medieval sermon, and its presence is no doubt one sign of Langland's debt to the *ars praedicandi*. At first sight, it may seem a somewhat crude art; but even on the phonetic level it is worth noticing how often the manifest pattern of repeated alliterative sounds is only one part of a more complex auditory pattern. Thus in line 197 the alliteration on *h*/vowel- is accompanied by a whole series of *-a-* sounds: "So harde hath avarice yhasped hem togideres". In line 203 both alliterating words in the first half have a second syllable beginning with *f-*, and all three alliterating words include an *-r-* sound: "To conforten the carefulle acombred with synne". In line 205 all three alliterating words are monosyllables beginning with *g-* and ending with the similar sounds *-t* or *-th*, so that these words differ significantly only in their vowels. This may be thought of as an example of verbal play such as is also present in line 182 (*good/God*) and line 186 (*feith/feet*). The auditory patterning of Langland's verse, though rarely ostentatious, is often subtly pleasing.

Little progress, however, can be made in discussing the sound of a passage of verse without passing on to its content. In this passage, the chief means by which Langland gives life to Holichirche's message is a means characteristic of alliterative poetry generally,

and also of the medieval sermon - the concrete realization of abstract ideas in terms of scenes and objects belonging to daily experience. The most noticeable here are the similes of the weeping child, of Malkyn and her virginity, and of the lamp without a light. None of those is in itself a learned comparison; though there may be Latin analogues, each belongs in its primary significance to common life and the common language; but each of them is strikingly and subtly related to the theological message that Holichirche wishes to convey. The weeping child is weeping in church, and therefore is presumably, as Skeat suggested, a baby howling as babies so often do when splashed with water at their christening: what could be chaster than a newly-baptized infant, restored for an instant to man's original innocence? Malkyn is introduced suddenly and with pungent effect; the coarse saying rams home the argument unanswerably: what could be more unmeritorious than virginity retained only because no-one desires to take it? But for any reader who recalls the passage from James's epistle that underlies this part of the poem, the allusion is subtle as well as coarse. James mentions as an *exemplum* of justification by works the harlot Rahab, whose story is told in the book of Joshua;[8] though a prostitute, she nevertheless showed courage and generosity in defying the king of Jericho to protect two spies sent by Joshua. Langland's Malkyn, claiming a merit in the very virginity she has been unable to lose, is precisely the opposite to Rahab, chastity without charity as opposed to charity without chastity. Finally, the lamp: anyone can immediately see the uselessness of a lamp that fails to serve the only purpose for which it is intended, to give light. But here too there is a Scriptural allusion intertwined with the everyday comparison - an allusion, as editors have noted, to the parable of the wise and foolish virgins of Matthew xxv 1-13. The foolish virgins who had no oil for their lamps were unable to light them to greet the bridegroom Christ and were refused entrance to his marriage; that is, they were denied salvation and were thus "cheyned in helle". An image taken from a parable about virgins is obviously an appropriate *exemplum* to illustrate the theme of *chastite*.

As the passage proceeds, we find more metaphors than similes, and these add even more forcibly to its concreteness. Some of them belong to trains of imagery that recur thematically throughout *Piers Plowman*. One such is that of treasure and keys, here developed unexpectedly from the imprisoning and fettering power of an avaricious desire for earthly treasures to the "lok of love" (202) that sets free the spiritual treasure of divine grace.[9] Others are the images of love as a doctor and as a road in lines 204-5. There are also some startlingly concrete local metaphors, often in the form of verbs indicating powerful or violent activity. In line 193 the clergy who have gained advancement as chaplains or chantry priests, and in Langland's view are selling spiritual services for material reward, "*Chewen* hire charite": charity has now changed momentarily from what they ought to give to what they are greedy to receive; they gobble it up and swallow it down, and clamour for more.[10] Again, there is the group of verbs used to convey the oppressively cramping force of covetousness and avarice in lines 196-7: covetousness of others' goods is such a heavy burden to the parish priests that they cannot crawl out from underneath it, and avarice has clamped them up

tightly, as if they were their own locked treasure-chests. Only God's grace can release them from their spiritual prison.

In the passage as a whole then, simple and repetitious as it may seem, there is a genuine poetic creativeness in the solidity the poet's imagination confers on his doctrine; but what is important to grasp is that it is, as it were, an unstable solidity. It is not a matter of the building up of a single image through a whole paragraph, but of a rapid movement from one forceful realization of the underlying doctrine to a second and then to a third. In general, Langland does not strike the reader as at all a Shakespearean poet, but in this one respect there is a real ground for comparison with the mature Shakespeare's manner of "telescoping" one image into another. Given that Langland, in devoting all his energies to the creation of a single moral allegory, is doing something radically unShakespearean, this fact gives his allegory a most unusual and baffling nature: it feels solid yet it will not stay still: it is at once earthy and dreamlike. We cannot possibly understand the nature of Langland's allegory without fixing our attention with the greatest closeness on the way he uses words. "His task is the exploration of the spiritual unknown. The poet works his way into this unknown, laboriously and self-doubtingly, and his words do not merely express the outcome of a search, but are essential instruments operating within the search."[11] I hope this will emerge more clearly from my second example.

This is the opening lines of the confession of Wrath:

'I am Wrathe,' quod he, 'I was som tyme a frere,
And the coventes gardyner for to graffen impes.
On lymitours and listres lesynges I ymped,
Til thei beere leves of lowe speche, lordes to plese,
And sithen thei blosmede abrood in boure to here shriftes.
And now is fallen therof a fruyt - that folk han wel levere
Shewen hire shriftes to hem than shryve hem to hir persons.
And now persons han parceyved that freres parte with hem,
Thise possessioners preche and deprave freres;
And freres fyndeth hem in defaute, as folk bereth witnesse,
That whan thei preche the peple in many places aboute,
I, Wrathe, walke with hem and wisse hem of my bokes.
Thus thei speken of spiritualte, that either despiseth oother,
Til thei be bothe beggers and by my spiritualte libben,
Or ellis al riche and ryden aboute; I, Wrathe, reste nevere
That I ne moste folwe this wikked folk, for swich is my grace.
'I have an aunte to nonne and an abbesse:
Hir were levere swowe or swelte than suffre any peyne.
I have be cook in hir kichene and the covent served
Manye monthes with hem, and with monkes bothe.
I was the prioresse potager and other povere ladies,
And maad hem joutes of janglyng - that Dame Johane was a bastard,
And Dame Clarice a knyghtes doughter - ac a cokewold was hir sire,
And Dame Pernele a preestes fyle - Prioresse worth she nevere,
For she hadde child in chirie-tyme, al oure Chapitre it wiste!

160 Of wikkede wordes I Wrathe hire wortes made,
Til "Thow lixt!" and "Thow lixt!" lopen out at ones
And either hitte oother under the cheke;
Hadde thei had knyves, by Crist! hir either hadde kild oother.'
(B V 135-63)

It is often held that one of the great merits of Langland's presentation of the Seven Deadly Sins is the method of "dramatic personification",[12] and at first sight that seems to be the case here. Wrath, unusually personified "as the stirrer-up of anger in others, as a diabolical sower of discord, rather than as if he were the embodiment of anger",[13] describes his career in the last place that sin ought to be found - in the ecclesiastical world, ranging through friars, parish priests, monks, nuns - and he speaks of himself as having held three different positions in that world. First he was gardener to a house of friars; then, in lines 145-6, he appears momentarily in a grander role, as a teaching friar like the Doctor of Divinity met by the Dreamer in B XIII; and after that his role is as cook to a house of nuns. In principle I suppose it is possible that the same person could have held all three positions in the course of his life, though it is highly unlikely; but Langland's aim is clearly not to provide Wrath with a consistent realistic life-history. Anger, like the other sins, is a failing found in men and women of all conditions - indeed in the C-text Wrath himself makes just this point when he says that "Amonges alle manere men my dwellyng is som tyme" (C VI 115).[14] Thus no particular manifestation of anger can be allowed to exclude all others. The ecclesiastical world is chosen as the setting here, but the only other link among Wrath's roles lies in the image of vegetables: what he grows for the friars as gardener, he then feeds to the nuns as cook.

The first section of the passage, lines 135-41, contains an ingeniously worked-out but tightly compressed allegory. As gardener, Wrath grafts shoots of lying on to the friars themselves (an idea acceptable only because it is *not* given any pictorial development). By means of this grafting process, the friars first bear leaves of humble speech, with which they flatter lords, and then "blossom abroad" in the practice of hearing ladies' confessions privately in their "bowers". Blossom and bower, besides their alliterative link, are words which associate naturally together to suggest a courtly paradise or garden of the rose, but one which is seen here as the setting for distinctly furtive behaviour. This is partly a matter of confession not to the parish priest along with the other parishioners, but to the venal friar, who will impose an easier penance. But the following half-line - "And now is fallen therof a fruyt . . ." - at least hints that what is going on in the bower is something more than shrift, and that its outcome is pregnancy. (*Fallen* combines two senses, abstract (ensued) and concrete (dropped from that which bears it); and later, in line 159, an illegitimate child is associated with the fruit season.) In terms of the original allegory, the fruit is the widespread preference for confessing to a friar rather than to the parish priest. And so at last, by this indirect and paradoxical route, we get from flattery to anger, in the form of the general enmity between friars and beneficed clergy as they compete for the profitable right to hear confessions.

Then, in lines 142-4, Langland moves from allegory to literal social description: the mutual slanders of parsons and mendicants are part of the reality of his time, and the elaborate gardening-allegory, that in another poem might have occupied a whole book, has already dissolved after only five lines. The utter prodigality is typical of Langland, and we shall misunderstand the very structure of his poem if we fail to grasp that its segments of allegorical narrative do not form a continuous whole. Processes of growth and revision are constantly taking place, not just between the A-text and the B-text, or between B and C, but within each text. Langland may have hoped ultimately to arrive at a final and complete vision of life - a D-text or E-text or Z-text - but in practice that is not what he offers in any of the texts we have. Every allegorical formulation is merely provisional; every text is already a palimpsest, with one formulation inscribed on top of another. It is not so much a matter, I think, of his "deliberately frustrating the desire for allegorical tidiness",[15] as of the poem's very language having a flexibility, an unmechanical irregularity and changefulness, that leads the work as a whole towards something quite different, whatever Langland may have wished or planned. I think it likely enough that he wished or hoped for "allegorical tidiness", but he could only follow the bent of the life that his mind and body actually lived in language, and that was towards something other than the programmatic and the prescriptive.

In the second section, Anger as master and even perhaps prelate accompanies the friars as they wander about preaching, and teaches them from the books that mark his new status. The multiple meanings of *spiritualte* in these lines have been explored by editors,[16] but may perhaps still be clarified (or complicated) further. The friars and priests "speken of spiritualte" (147): one would naturally take this to mean "spiritual matters" (compare *OED*, sense 3: "The quality or condition of being spiritual; attachment to or regard for things of the spirit as opposed to material or worldly interests"), but the context insists that its real meaning must be almost exactly opposite: "ecclesiastical property or revenue held or received in return for spiritual services" (*OED*, sense 2). The two parties are quarrelling about the income to be gained from confessions, and in this way their *spiritualte*, the endowment they live on (and also perhaps the spirit they live by) comes to be that of Wrath himself. Thus friar and parson reduce each other to the same condition - both beggars (with the priest reduced to the same contemptible state as the friar, begging for gifts from lords and ladies), or both rich men riding on horses (with the friar having totally abandoned the poverty claimed by his order); perhaps too beggars so far as spiritual qualities are concerned but rich in anger. There is a further pun on *grace* (150): it is Wrath's chance or vocation (the grace granted to him by virtue of his very allegorical identity) but also the "grace", such as it is, that he bestows on these ecclesiastics, to stick to them like a leech. The puns on *spiritualte* and *grace* both derive from the paradox, deeply troubling to Langland and to many of his contemporaries, of a Church which exists to serve as the channel for spiritual truth and divine grace, but which has come to be a temporal institution of great wealth and

power. In my laborious exposition, they lose their felicity; in Langland's text, they do not appear to be worked out systematically, but to be seized on the wing. This tendency to pun, in Langland as in Shakespeare, is one sign of the poet's reliance on the multi-dimensionality of language itself.

In the third section (lines 151ff.) Wrath is cook to the nuns, though it is mentioned in passing that he has served in the same capacity with monks. After the satirical comment on his aunt the abbess, with her horror of any form of mortification of the flesh, the cook image looks as though it is going to be developed into another local allegory, like the earlier image of the grafted shoots. Wrath made the nuns "joutes of janglyng" (156), stews or broths of gossip (leading on to the other sense of *janglyng* as "squabbling"); but then the development takes a different direction, with no further unfolding of the suggested allegorical narrative, but a literal presentation of the malicious gossip that leads on to a further manifestation of anger. The parody of the sisters' spiteful whispers about each other is a little masterpiece of comedy; and one notes how readily alliterative verse, with its closeness to the rhythms of spoken English and "dramatic freedom of phrasing", lends itself to mimicry of speech. Here the lines lengthen with additional, idiomatically slurred, unstressed syllables, to give a perfect imitation of the nuns' eager whispering. In line 160 yet another example of wordplay marks a brief revival of the allegory: the *wortes*, or vegetable soup, that Wrath makes for them naturally consists of malicious *wordes*. And then the allegory is fractured once more, and takes a sudden jump in yet another direction: the nuns' actual outbursts of angry words - "You're a liar!" and "You're another!" - are momentarily personified with sufficient energy to leap forth. That this is, at least potentially, a case of vigorous though very small-scale personification is confirmed by the revised form of the lines in the C-text:

> Thus sytte they, þo sustres, sum tyme, and disputen
> Til 'thow lixt' and 'thow lixt' be lady ouer hem alle.
> (C VI 137-8)

Here "thow lixt" becomes "lady" over all the sisters: that is, becomes mother superior of the convent. (The earlier gossip about who might be prioress prepares us to read the line in such terms.) There is of course no character in the poem called "Thow Lixt", though there is one called Lyere, who at B II 216 "leaps" as "Thow lixt!" does at B V 161. But even the dividing line between what does and what does not count as a character in *Piers Plowman* is blurred by the insistent tendency of Langland's poetic idiom towards momentary humanizations, and the coexistent rapidity and fluidity of movement that leaves them behind as soon as they are created. Almost every line has a new charge of dramatizing energy; and the power to create dramatic fictions is not focused on the level of overall design so much as it is diffused throughout the poem on the level of the sentence and even of the line.

This passage ends with a line which soberly states the outcome of gossip that began by looking merely amusing: a murderous

anger that would lead even nuns to kill each other, if they had the means. "By Crist!" (163) is surely not merely an expletive to fill out the metre and the alliteration, but carries a significant reminder of the supposed purpose of life in a religious order.

My third example can be treated more briefly. It is intended to illustrate the characteristic juxtaposition of opposite extremes in Langland's verse - the prosaic and the wildly imaginative, the satiric and the sublime - and the way in which it proceeds by imaginative association rather than by logic. This passage is extracted from a long and apparently rambling discourse by Ymaginatif in which, as he explains in the lines following those I quote, his purpose is to correct the Dreamer's earlier assertion that the ignorant are more likely to be saved than the learned. In these lines he distinguishes between the natural philosophy of the ancients which, being based merely on physical observation, can bring no man to salvation, and the revelation of Christ's birth, which came equally to the shepherds and to the wise men from the east - men whose learning rather than their natural intelligence is emphasized, and who are described as *poetes* (149) as well as *magi*.

Olde lyveris toforn us useden to marke
The selkouthes that thei seighen, hir sones to teche,
And helden it an heigh science hir wittes to knowe.
Ac thorugh hir science soothly was nevere no soule ysaved,
135 Ne broght by hir bokes to blisse ne to joye;
For alle hir kynde knowyng com but of diverse sightes.
Patriarkes and prophetes repreveden hir science,
And seiden hir wordes ne hir wisdomes was but a folye;
As to the clergie of Crist, counted it but a trufle:
Sapiencia huius mundi stultitia est apud Deum.
140 For the heighe Holy Goost hevene shal tocleve,
And love shal lepe out after into this lowe erthe,
And clennesse shal cacchen it and clerkes shullen it fynde:
Pastores loquebantur ad invicem.
He speketh there of riche men right noght, ne of right witty,
Ne of lordes that were lewed men, but of the hyeste lettred oute:
145 *Ibant magi ab oriente.*
(If any frere were founde there, I yyve thee fyve shillynges!)
Ne in none beggers cote was that barn born,
But in a burgeises place, of Bethlem the beste:
Set non erat ei locus in diversorio - et pauper non habet diversorium.
To pastours and to poetes appered the aungel,
150 And bad hem go to Bethlem Goddes burthe to honoure,
And songe a song of solas, *Gloria in excelsis Deo!*
Riche men rutte tho and in hir reste were,
Tho hit shon to shepherdes, a shewer of blisse.
(B XII 131-53)

The progress of the thought here, as in the whole of Ymaginatif's speech, is difficult to follow in detail, and it seems really to reflect the movements of Langland's ruminating mind as he puzzles

over the problem of the value of learning, to which he returns again and again in this part of the poem. Once more it may be helpful to be reminded of the mature Shakespeare's habitual movement of thought, especially as described by Coleridge in a contrast between Shakespeare's mode of composition and that of some of his contemporaries. "Shakespeare's intellectual action," Coleridge is recorded to have said,

> is wholly unlike that of Ben Jonson or Beaumont and Fletcher. The latter see the totality of a sentence or passage, and then project it entire. Shakespeare goes on creating, and evolving B. out of A., and C. out of B., and so on, just as a serpent moves, which makes a fulcrum of its own body, and seems forever twisting and untwisting its own strength.[17]

Langland's method of procedure is often like Shakespeare's as Coleridge describes it. On the intellectual level, his serpentine motion seems sometimes to depend on mere sophistries, such as the argument that Jesus was not born in a place of total poverty but in an inn, "and a poor man has no inn". (Langland is evidently taking sides in the controversy as to the absolute poverty of Christ and the claim of one branch of the friars that they alone achieved Christian perfection by imitating that poverty.) But the real progress of the passage takes place not on the level of propositions linked by logic but on that of images linked by action. It begins with some lines of prosaic and somewhat grumbling argument asserting the ineffectiveness of the accumulated knowledge of which the pagans were so proud; but then, with the quotation from I Corinthians, the verse takes a quite unexpected leap into sublimity, a leap which enacts the suddenness of the Christian revelation itself. Its visionary quality is conveyed by the use of the future tense for what has already happened (though there is also a sense in which, as an event in the individual soul, it can happen at any time); it is as if an angel prophesies to us as one did to the shepherds. The Holy Spirit splits open the heavens, love leaps from the height to the depth, and this personified and active love, which is also the incarnate Christ, is caught as it falls by *clennesse* and found by *clerkes*. In that characteristic pairing of abstract with concrete, *clennesse* is the Blessed Virgin, who "catches" Christ in her womb, and the *clerkes* evidently include the shepherds (here figures of the priesthood, *pastores*, in Langland's fragmentary reminder of Luke's Nativity narrative) as well as the *magi*.

After this, the verse relapses once again to a more prosaic level, muttering unedifyingly of who was and was not present and the material circumstances of the birth. The exalted vision of the very moment at which God became man does not exclude this, nor does it exclude satirical familiarity. Langland's sardonic "If any frere were founde there, I yyve thee fyve shillynges!" (146), promising a larger tip than even the most optimistic friar could expect, has something of the effect of a grotesque misericord carving in a noble choir. Favourite themes for such carvings included antimendicant satire, such as the fox as friar preaching to a congregation of geese; and yet what Langland is depicting here - a conspicuous and

derisible absence - is beyond the scope of pictorial or plastic art. As the attack on the claims of the friars continues in the next lines, Langland seems to have lost the sublime vision that he grasped briefly in lines 140-2; and then, equally unexpectedly, it returns in the closing lines of the extract, and especially in the last two. Everyday life is drenched in brilliant light, which discloses heaven in its very midst. In this extraordinarily compressed little scene, the grotesque becomes part of the sublime instead of being merely placed alongside it: the radiance of the star announcing the Nativity shows us not only the watchful shepherds as they glimpse the bliss of heaven, but the rich men manifesting their sloth and ignorance by their snores.

The passages I have been discussing illustrate, of course, only a small part of Langland's achievement as a poet, and my discussion of them has been only fragmentary. This is inevitable, and also desirable, for no reader wishes to have a great poet read for him by someone else. In the course of writing about them, I have found myself referring more often than I intended or expected to Shakespeare. Langland, I repeat, is in most respects not a Shakespearean poet; but the comparison may be of use if it acts as a reminder of the need to recognize in *Piers Plowman* an activity of mind deeply embedded in the English language (and also of course in the interaction of Latin with English), and not capable of being interpreted solely in terms of preconceived systems of ideas.

NOTES

1 A.C. Spearing, *Criticism and Medieval Poetry* (London, 1964) p.5.

2 The phrase is borrowed from Nevill Coghill, "God's Wenches and the Light that Spoke (Some notes on Langland's kind of poetry)", in *English and Medieval Studies Presented to J.R.R. Tolkien*, ed. Norman Davis and C.L. Wrenn (London, 1962) pp.200-18.

3 A.C. Spearing, "Verbal Repetition in *Piers Plowman* B and C", *Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 62 (1963) pp.722-37; p.723.

4 Here and elsewhere I quote the B-text from William Langland, *The Vision of Piers Plowman*, ed. A.V.C. Schmidt (London, 1978). In the present passage, in preference to Schmidt's punctuation of lines 181-2, I have adopted that of George Kane and E. Talbot Donaldson in *Piers Plowman: The B Version* (London, 1975).

5 *Piers Plowman - An Introduction* (Oxford, 1962) pp.21, 22, 35, 37-40, 41.

6 Thorlac Turville-Petre, *The Alliterative Revival* (Cambridge, 1977) p.103.

7 *Op.cit.*, p.29; see also my article cited above and *Criticism and Medieval Poetry*, pp.88-92.

8 James ii:25; Joshua ii.

9 Compare for example the supreme enactment of release from prison in the Harrowing of Hell in B XVIII, supported by metaphors such as *unspered* (86) and *unjoynen and unlouken* (257).

10 Jill Mann, "Eating and Drinking in *Piers Plowman*", *Essays and Studies*, n.s. 32 (1979) pp.26-43, writes admirably about the relationship of this passage to other food-images and about the difficulty of separating the literal from the metaphorical in Langland's references to food. See also A.V.C. Schmidt, "Langland's Structural Imagery", *Essays in Criticism* 30 (1980) pp.311-25; p.316.

11 John Holloway, *The Proud Knowledge* (London, 1977) p.65. Holloway is writing about Wordsworth, with reference to the early books of the 1805 *Prelude*, but the description is strangely apt to Langland.

12 The phrase is used in connection with Wrath's confession by Elizabeth Salter and Derek Pearsall in *Piers Plowman* (London, 1967) p.82. Derek Pearsall, however (*Piers Plowman* (London, 1978) p.109) notes that much of the circumstantial detail in Langland's personification of the sins as sinners "goes beyond the possible experience of a single individual".

13 *Ibid.*, p.114.

14 I quote C from Pearsall, *ed.cit.*

15 Priscilla Jenkins, "Conscience: The Frustration of Allegory", in *Piers Plowman: Critical Approaches*, ed. S.S. Hussey (London, 1969) p.128.

16 E.g. by J.A.W. Bennett in *Piers Plowman* (Oxford, 1972) p.161 and Schmidt,

ed.cit., p.316.

17 S.T. Coleridge, *Table Talk*, 5 March 1834.

STRANGE IMAGES OF DEATH

By PHILIPPA TRISTRAM

In the heat of action, death holds for Macbeth no terrors - "Nothing afeard of what thyself didst make, / Strange images of death" - but in contemplation it assumes a different aspect: "Present fears / Are less than horrible imaginings".[1] From the fourteenth into the seventeenth century there is a continuity in those "strange images" that, in literature as in art and in commonplace speech, interpose between men's present fears when faced with the fact of death, and those "imaginings", which may sometimes be so much more horrible than the fact. Some of these traditional images are themselves horrible, for, as Bacon said, "Men fear death, as children fear to go into the dark, and as that natural fear in children is increased with tales, so is the other";[2] but there are many others that seek to transcend that fear, or at least allay it. Indeed, it is one of the signs of the greatest literature that, in its understandings, life and death are inextricably related.

Images of death from the medieval past which survive into the Jacobean present are not to be found in sources, such as books, that can be easily authenticated. But the persistence of a living medieval presence into Shakespeare's time - in objects still visible, in tales still told, in insights that had dwindled to commonplace aphorisms - must have been more marked than can now be easily imagined. Two to three centuries could be described as the period of envisageable history: Georgian England is still very much a part of our present life, as medieval and Elizabethan England are not. In Shakespeare's time the medieval legacy would have required no painstaking reconstruction; it would still have been an everyday part of the usual landscape.

It is, however, true that Renaissance attitudes to death differed significantly from those of the Middle Ages in England. Bosola, in *The Duchess of Malfi*, sardonically describes the new Jacobean emphasis in tomb sculpture:

> Princes images on their tombes
> Do not lie, as they were wont, seeming to pray
> Up to heaven: but with their hands under their cheekes,
> (As if they died of the tooth-ache) - they are not carved
> With their eies fix'd upon the starres; but as
> Their mindes were wholy bent upon the world,
> The selfe-same way they seeme to turne their faces.[3]

This worldly emphasis, sustained by rotund Latin epitaphs which

dwell upon a man's dignities in this life, not his ignominy and anonymity in death, marks the difference between that earlier age, which sought the significance of this life in an afterlife, and the later which, though by no means irreligious, looked for the significance of this life in this world.

Nonetheless, what the Duchess describes as new "fashion in the grave" was so because still paralleled by the old medieval mode. Not only the serene effigies of the high Middle Ages, but their later and stranger images of death, find their way into Shakespeare's plays. The double tomb, where the composed effigy of the body in its final state surmounts the anguished, decaying cadaver beneath, is recalled in Hal's dual epitaph for Hotspur. His resilient words - "This earth, that bears thee dead, / Bears not alive so stout a gentleman" - delineate the effigy *au vif*; but the recognition that Hotspur is now but dust and food for worms images the *en transit* and spells out its meaning:

> When that this body did contain a spirit,
> A kingdom for it was too small a bound,
> But now two paces of the vilest earth
> Is room enough.[4]

One may glimpse the Dance of Death in the words of the dying Hamlet, though the image has retreated from literalism into the metaphor whence it originated: "Had I but time, as this fell sergeant, Death, / Is strict in his arrest".[5] The popular medieval legend of the three living and the three dead is newly enacted as Pericles gazes upon the skulls of his predecessors and spells out the significance of the *memento mori*.[6]

It is in *Pericles*, of all the plays of Shakespeare, that this aspect of the medieval past is most fully exhibited and understood. These unauthenticated medieval sources are quite different from those more immediate, which have of course been thoroughly authenticated. They are Gower's story of Apollonius of Tyre in Book VIII of his *Confessio Amantis*, written in the late fourteenth century, and Laurence Twine's *Patterne of Paynfull Aduentures*, registered in 1576, "the most excellent, pleasant and variable history of the strange accidents that fell unto Prince Apollonius". But *Pericles* is undoubtedly medieval in more respects than its debt to Gower and his story; it is perhaps the most medieval of all Shakespeare's plays, more so even than the early histories of Henry VI, for its imagination seems more profoundly attentive to the legacies of that earlier age which must have persisted into Shakespeare's lifetime. Sometimes these are felt as visible survivals, in the tombs and paintings of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, which must, before the Civil Wars of the seventeenth century, have been much more numerous in parish churches than they are today. Sometimes one is made powerfully aware of oral as distinct from written traditions, of stories passed down by tellers of tales amongst the humble, as much as those transmitted by writers to the educated. As Shakespeare's Gower remarks of his story of Pericles:

> It hath been sung at festivals,

On ember-eaves and holy ales;
And lords and ladies in their lives
Have read it for restoratives.[7]

Sometimes the afterlife of that medieval past may be felt in the aphoristic wisdom, of old saws and old sayings, that permeates the play, for the older a good thing is of course the better:

The purchase is to make men glorious;
Et bonum quo antiquius, eo melius.

It is however that rustic character, together with its exclusion from the first folio, which have led both critics and scholars to suggest that *Pericles*, at least in its first two acts, is the work of another and inferior writer. Scholarship, at present, entertains two possibilities: that, on the one hand, it is indeed the play of that inferior writer, taken over by Shakespeare in the last three acts; or, on the other, that the text is actually Shakespeare's, incompetently reported in the two first acts. It is perhaps possible to argue a third position: that the inferiority of those first two acts has been over-emphasized, and that their old wisdoms are essential to the rest of the play. If he did not write them, Shakespeare was clearly willing to accommodate them, as he accommodates into the acceptable last three acts the stumbling metres and drasty rhymes of the reincarnated Gower, Chaucer's moral friend. The play as a whole seems to afford ample testimony that, at the end of Shakespeare's writing life, he became newly attentive to the simplicities of old stories, old sayings and old imaginings of death. For Pericles is, in at least one major perspective, a play about death - and not death only, but its transcendence too, through purgation and resurrection. It is Shakespeare's debt to the strange images of that medieval past, and his transformation of them through the three stages of death, purgation and resurrection, which this article is concerned to trace.

The fear of death, expressed in one of the darkest and strangest of medieval imaginings of mortality, is the play's point of departure. The stage direction - "Before the palace of Antioch, with heads displayed above the entrance" - does to that macabre spectacle a justice as scant as the brief allusions of Twine and the original Gower. In *Pericles*, however, the attention of the audience is repeatedly drawn to the exhibited fate of those previous unsuccessful suitors. Shakespeare's Gower indicates the heads:

So for her many a wight did die,
As yon grim looks do testify.

Antiochus himself recalls his guest to their significance: "Yon sometimes famous princes, like thyself . . .". Pericles, in acknowledging that relation, confirms their connection with the late medieval legend of the three living and the three dead, a tale, in Bacon's terms, calculated to increase the natural fear of mortality. In words related to those that the dead in the legend offer to the living, he interprets the significance of that macabre *memento mori*:

> Antiochus, I thank thee, who hath taught
> My frail mortality to know itself,
> And by those fearful objects to prepare
> This body, like to them, to what I must;
> For death remembered should be like a mirror,
> Who tells us life's but breath, to trust it error.[8]

That is the response which - to take only one example - Henryson's three dead skulls intend to elicit from the living through their address:

> O sinfull man, into this mortall se
> Quhilk is the vaill of murnyng and of cair,
> With gaistly sicht behold our heidis thre,
> Oure holkit ene, oure peilit pollis bair:
> As ye ar now, into this warld we wair,
> Als fresche, als fair, als lusty to behald;
> Quhan thow lukis on this suth examplair
> Off thyself, man, thow may be richt unbald.[9]

The legend is not only the first, but remains in England by far the most popular, of the many charnel representations of death. The story may be visually expressed in a single scene, where three princes, usually engaged in hunting, encounter three animate skeletons representing their fathers or predecessors. The moral does not need to be spelt out, but the words of the dead are actually inscribed at Wensley: "As we are nove thus sal ye be . . . bewar wyt me". The earliest surviving versions of this tale are to be found in four French poems of the late thirteenth century. A reduced version of one of these, accompanied by a manuscript illumination, appears in England in the Arundel Manuscript in about 1330. Thereafter the theme acquires an extraordinary popularity, not so much in literature although it has a presence there, as in manuscript illumination and particularly in wall painting. Representations may still be seen in quite humble parish churches throughout the country, though they are most numerous in the Midlands and home counties. They would therefore have been thoroughly familiar, not to Shakespeare only, but to his audience. It is possible that, in the late fourteenth and fifteenth centuries in England, no single subject was as frequently depicted, since certain other themes (like the Corporal Works of Mercy), which exist or are recorded in equal numbers, have not been so vulnerable to the depredations of the disapproving. For depictions of the legend can be graphically horrible: the animate dead are often visibly putrefying, and may even parody in the stages of corruption - bloated, dessicated, skeletal - the three ages into which the living are sometimes distinguished. The medieval enthusiasm of the Victorians did not extend to its charnel aspect, and these curious lapses in an age of supposed faith were often scraped from the walls or whitewashed over.

Victorian parsons were not, however, merely prudish; they had their point. In terms of most Christian thinking, the legend - as distinct from its moral - was quite unorthodox. However useful and instructive its intentions, the dead body had no business to walk

about; it was supposed to lie quietly in the grave while the soul departed for its individual judgement. Both the legend itself, and those other animate dead it seems to beget in the Dance of Death and the personification with scythe and hourglass, are aberrations in Christian thinking so marked that they may indicate an uncertainty about the origin and purpose of death itself. The Bible and the Church did not make clear whether it was natural or unnatural, and who had created it, God or the Devil. The urgency of such questions must have been intensified by recurrent outbreaks of plague from 1348 to the end of the Middle Ages. Its inexplicability, the suddenness and arbitrariness of its manifestations, could not but have given an edge to such problems, and done much to foster the charnel imagination which embodied them.

When Bosola describes those old images who gaze up to heaven, their eyes fixed upon the stars, he is alluding to the effigy *au vif*, to the intention rather than the fact of the *en transit*. In Pericles' words, "Death remembered should be like a mirror, / Who tells us life's but breath, to trust it error." The *memento mori* is intended to redirect the attention from the transient joys of this world to the eternal, unchanging aspect of the heavens. But the effect of the charnel image is often the reverse of its intention; far from fixing the eyes of men upon the stars, it limits their vision to the grave. The late medieval preacher, like Chaucer's parson, needed to look no further for the torments of the damned; the sentient experience of corruption was hell enough. It was, moreover, the fate awaiting all men.

The greatest writers of the Middle Ages, perhaps for this reason, have no truck with the charnel imagination. They allude to it certainly, but their questioning of death's meaning goes far beyond it. Chaucer's attitude is of particular interest in the context of *Pericles*, for his *Pardoner's Tale* seems to allude, much as Shakespeare's first scene does, to the familiar legend of living and dead. Three young rioters in their pride of life, who set out actually to hunt for death, must not only have related, in the mind of the audience, to that well-known story, but must have led them also to anticipate its denouement. The frustration of that expectation is part of the point. There is no figure of death. This tale at least refuses to increase that natural fear.

From the tale's beginning the genesis of such horrible imaginings is traced in the strange growth of language, from metaphor through personification to actual figure. "Beth redy for to meete [Deeth] everemoore" the boy servant was once enjoined by his mother.[10] That embryonic metaphor becomes personification as the taverner confirms that Death has his dwelling in a neighbouring, plague-striken village, and the figure is actualized when one of the rioters declares in response: "He shal be slayn, he that so manye sleeth".[11] As events develop, they dispose systematically of such literalism. The Old Man is sometimes interpreted as a figure of death, and it is true that Age, in medieval writing, is often tantamount to a walking corpse and serves the same instructive purpose. But Chaucer's Old Man is not charnel; rather, he dwindles decently to mere bone. He is moreover exceptional in his

longing for death; for the first time in English literature - and the last until the Renaissance - he addresses earth as a mother in death as in birth. Death in age is thus natural and desireable, while death in youth, though unnatural, is not arbitrary. The rioters are destroyed by their own avarice, and death is thus assimilated to man's moral being.

This tale has a peculiarly humanistic cast, in that it confines itself to the insights this life affords; but, while Chaucer rarely writes from an explicitly religious viewpoint, he often indicates it tacitly. The Pardoner draws his gloomy texts from St Paul's Epistles: "Ther walken manye of whiche . . . the ende is deeth"; "Mete unto wombe, and wombe eek unto mete, / Shal God destroyen bothe".[12] In context, however, one finds those others for whom the end is not death, but the contrary prospect of the flesh glorified through Christ, "Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body".[13]

Shakespeare's allusion to the legend in *Pericles* contrasts surprisingly with Chaucer's, in that the later instance is the more medieval, for it restores to the story the significance it was meant originally to have by disposing of the animation of the dead princes. The image of the mirror, which Pericles employs, recurs in medieval literature that alludes to the legend:

> Makes youre mirrours bi me, men bi youre trouthe -
> This schadowe in my schewere schunte ye no while

Elde enjoins in *The Parlement of the Thre Ages*.[14] In some written versions the dead are revealed to be the fathers of the living; in some visual representations they still sport the signs of office - sword, crown and crozier - which the living bear. They are only a step away from the Dance of Death, where the individual both is, and is not, its victim's future. In *Pericles* the skulls of "Yon sometimes famous princes" are not Pericles, in that they represent the fate he evades, yet he recognizes in them the mirror of himself. On the physical level they represent the corruption of the body within the fair exterior; on the spiritual level they recall him to an incorruptible beauty which the grave cannot deface. Thus he wills his corruptible riches to the earth "from whence they came", and bequeaths his unspotted fire of love to the maiden.

That bequest, consigning the corruptible part of man to earth, while avowing an incorruptible, enduring love, lies of course within the romance convention; but, in its distinction between body and spirit, it also has religious significance. Amongst other things, this opening scene is an allusion to the Fall of Man, and it was with the Fall that death became man's destiny. Antiochus alludes to his daughter in classical metaphor:

> Before thee stands this fair Hesperides,
> With golden fruit, but dangerous to be touched.

But Pericles has already given to that metaphor another, Christian emphasis:

> You gods that made me man and sway in love,
> That have inflamed desire in my breast
> To taste the fruit of yon celestial tree
> Or die in the adventure, be my helps.[15]

The desire to taste the fruit of another celestial tree once led to man's mortality through Adam's sin. When Pericles understands the riddle, he acquires the knowledge of good and evil and endangers his life. Antiochus's daughter, so fair without, "apparelled like the spring", is corrupt within in the sense that the living princes of the legend are, in the pride of life which is also spiritual death. The opening scene of *Pericles*, although it follows a different path, arrives ultimately at the same destination as Chaucer's. The charnel aspect of man, the corruption of the body after death, has in itself little to tell us about mortality. Death, properly understood, is a state of sin, intrinsic to man's moral being. Where that moral being remains unspotted, it is incorruptible in more senses than one.

The original sin in the play (the incest of Antiochus and his daughter) is not of Pericles' making, any more than Adam's was the sin of his descendants; it acts, however, like original sin. As mankind was driven from the earthly paradise into the thorns and brambles of a fallen world, so Pericles is driven from his earthly kingdom into the perils of the "mortal sea", Henryson's "vaill of murnyng and of cair". This is the journey of life, the long road back to an original state, but it is also in some sense a journey beyond life, a pilgrimage of expiation whose end is redemption.

From the first, again as in the case of Adam, this long voyage is not without its prospect of future comfort. The sin of Adam was a *felix culpa*, the sin of Eva was also the Ave of Mary. The wisdom of old saws and old sayings is, from the first, as essential to this play as it once was to medieval thought. Every thesis implies its antithesis, every vice its corresponding virtue. The play opens with a destructive riddle, the solution to which, the daughter of Antiochus, is death:

> I am no viper, yet I feed
> On mother's flesh that did me breed.
> I sought a husband, in which labour
> I found that kindness from a father.
> He's father, son, and husband mild;
> I mother, wife, and yet his child.[16]

The play is resolved by a constructive riddle, the answer to which, Marina, is life: "Thou that beget'st him that did thee beget".[17] The play departs from a destructive proposition, "Fair without, but foul within"; it is resolved by its constructive antithesis, "Foul without, but fair within". Along with many other medieval parallels, *The Wife of Bath's Tale* invites and rewards a related range of perceptions - that inward worth has more value than fair outward seeming, that a foul appearance may belie a fair reality. Pericles, contending in rusty armour for Thaisa's hand, prompts one spectator

to comment:

> He had need mean better than his outward show
> Can any way speak in his just commend.[18]

Thaisa, more discerning, finds that armour transparent: "To me he seems like diamond to glass".[19] Lysimachus is at first misled by appearances when he discovers Marina in a brothel - "Why, the house you dwell in proclaims you to be a creature of sale" - but he is forced by her to admit that, despite appearances, she is "a piece of virtue".[20] Those whose fair seeming conceals an inward corruption are redeemed in the play by those whose foul seeming masks their inward beauty.

The Middle Ages had great faith in the truth of language, in its logic, its structure and its grammar. A pun was not a poor joke but an inward truth; a traditional saying was no cliché, but embodied the authority of ages; a thesis demanded its antithesis as a subject its object. Thus in Langland's Harrowing of Hell, Christ argues out his right to redeem mankind on grounds that are logical and grammatical as well as legal:

> *Ergo*, soule shal soule quyte, and synne to synne wende,
> And al that man hath mysdo, I, man, wyl amende.[21]

That truth, of necessary opposites, is the basis of his affirmation of an afterlife:

> "And I shal preue," quod Pees, "her peyne mote have ende,
> And wo in-to wel mowe wende atte laste;
> For had thei wist of no wo, wel had they noughte knowen.
> For no wight wote what wel is that nevere wo suffred,
> Ne what is hote hunger that had nevere defaute."[22]

One may sense in *Pericles* a related confidence.

It would, however, be a mistake to confine this confidence too much to the "folk wisdom" of the play. It can extend to the more sophisticated insights of the moral Gower and his philosophical friends. The meaning of Fortune, her relation to providence, and the difficulty of reconciling fate with freewill, was of course a dominant preoccupation, not only of Chaucer's, but of many late medieval writers. Fortune is the dynamic, at once deterministic and arbitrary, of the original Gower's story of Apollonius:

> Fortune hath evere be muable
> And mai no while stonde stable;
> For now it hiheth, now it loweth,
> Now stant upriht, now overthroweth,
> Now full of blisse and now of bale,
> As in the tellinge of mi tale.[23]

This figure, sometimes foul when fair in seeming, sometimes the reverse, enters Shakespeare's play on the level of folk wisdom,

and seems at first quite as arbitrary and cruel a goddess as in the most despairing of medieval renderings:

> And he, good prince, having all lost,
> By waves from coast to coast is tossed.
> All perishen of man, of pelf,
> Ne aught escapend but himself;
> Till fortune, tired with doing bad,
> Threw him ashore, to give him glad.[24]

This sea-sick motion of arbitrary chop and change, mimetic of the wheel, can be found in the original Gower, in Lydgate and in many others. In *Pericles*, however, that familiar rhythm is brought into contact with the choppy sea, and the mechanical rise and fall of the wheel becomes the movement of intractable waters:

> but fortune's mood
> Varies again; the grisléd north
> Disgorges such a tempest forth,
> That, as a duck for life that dives,
> So up and down the poor ship drives.[25]

The wheel of Fortune and the moods of the sea are alike, however, only in some respects. Although Philosophy urged Boethius to believe so, fortune is rarely felt by medieval poets to be a manifestation of providence in a fallen world. In *Pericles*, her obedience to a higher order is re-established. The presiding Goddess of the play is Diana, the moon, to whom both Marina and Thaisa dedicate themselves. Beneath the accidents of terrestrial weather, the arbitrary alternation of storm and calm, lies the steady rhythm of the tides themselves which answer predictably to the pull of the moon, a celestial, not a terrestrial, power.

In assimilating Fortune to the natural order, responsive in its turn to celestial powers, Shakespeare has at once recognized and resolved a figure which exercised as dark an influence on the medieval imagination as did those charnel images of mortality. But even this transformation is effected by medieval means, by eliciting the significance of certain elements intrinsic to the genre of medieval romance. Of all the available forms of medieval writing, the romance is least tainted by the terrors of mortality, least daunted by the arbitrary deity, Fortuna. This is not because the romance hero, as in renaissance drama, gathers into his hands the reins of his own destiny; it is because he surrenders himself, with unquestioning faith, to the journey of life.

The specific story of Apollonius of Tyre is, as it were, only the occasion of *Pericles*. Gower's version in the *Confessio Amantis* is a particular kind of romance, its moral variety. Shakespeare's play is much more than this: it is a recreation as much of the romance genre as of a particular tale; it is written, moreover with a complex awareness of the forms that genre may assume. The basic romance begins in catastrophe, which results in the severance of families, often parents from children. The offence of others is expiated by the "child", whose apparently random journey, across

perilous seas to strange lands, bring him at last, by what then seems to be a directed path, to the recovery of that which was lost. That journey to a preordained destination, whose meaning will only emerge with the final landfall, is an image of man's life; death waits for all at a place and time now unknown, holding the key to the meaning each life will ultimately assume. It is also an image of human history.

Pericles, like *Emaré*, is a tale of that kind, but it is also the moral tale of Constance, told by Chaucer's Man of Law. Pericles himself is an embodiment of fortitude, for he endures the sufferings of Job, while he himself successively identifies Marina with the moral personifications of Justice, Truth and Patience. But the moral romance may also, by another protean transformation, become the holy tale, the story of a saint. Connections have been made between Marina's plight in the brothel and the trials of Theodora, Serapia, Denise and St Agnes. A more inclusive relationship may be found to an incident which occurs in the later life of Mary Magdalene, when the saint converts the King of Marseilles and his wife to Christianity. This story, the moral tale of Constance and the romance of Emaré, all trace, as it were, the voyage of Pericles.

The Play of Mary Magdalene in the Digby MS dramatizes the incident, but it is on the whole a clumsy, routine affair, with little trace of the romance imagination. The version found in Caxton's translation of *The Golden Legend* has far more truth to that spirit, and indeed to *Pericles*. It is, of course, another unauthenticated source, but it could have been familiar to Shakespeare, either in that version, or in the traditional tales of "ember eves". The barren queen of Marseilles is made quick with child by the miraculous agency of the saint; in gratitude the couple set sail for Rome, on a pilgrimage of faith to find St Peter. Like Thaisa, the Queen gives birth at sea and dies, and here too sailors demand that the body be committed to the deep in order to satisfy the raging sea. At the King's intercession, however, both dead wife and living child are instead marooned on a rock so hard that no grave can be dug. The king persists in his pilgrimage of faith, and, when returning from Rome some two years later, receives his reward.

> And as they sailed by the sea, they came, by the ordinance of God, by the rock where the body of his wife was left, and his son . . . And the little child, whom Mary Magdalene had kept, went oftsithes to the seaside, and, like small children, took small stones and threw them into the sea . . . And when the child saw them, which had never seen people tofore, he was afraid, and ran secretly to his mother's breast and hid him under the mantle. And then the father of the child went for to see more appertly, and took the mantle, and found the child, which was right fair, sucking his mother's breast.[26]

The tale is beautifully told, with touches of that same domestic tenderness detectable in Shakespeare's storm at sea, "this poor

infant, this fresh-new seafarer". As in *Pericles*, that which was lost is found.

The story is at once of this life and of the afterlife, and as such it touches upon the resurrections of the play. Despite the medievalism of *Pericles*, it is clear from Caxton's translation how different Shakespeare's version also is from the simplicities of the medieval version. It is no explicit "ordinance of God" that directs Pericles, no saint's miracle that restores his dead to life. Yet the play is inescapably religious in a different sense, for it has the power of the finest romances, where mysterious journeying to an unseen end is as much the image of an afterlife as of this life. *Sir Gawain*, for example, although so fully a poem of this life, nonetheless traces the encounter with death which awaits Everyman. When Gawain survives the axe, it is because he has survived the trials of life, and thus death's scythe can hold for him no perils. In *Pericles* too the afterlife and this life are related. Thaisa, in Pericles' eyes and those of the audience, does die in childbirth and is buried at sea; Marina, "born at sea" is "buried at Tharsus". Pericles regards his own condition, his face unwashed, his hair unkempt, his mind deranged, as a death from which Marina raises him. As in the romances, the resurrections in this play may have their terrestrial explanations, but they are resurrections nonetheless.

Shakespeare's confidence in the restorative power of "wayward seas" has, in its submarine aspect, no precedent either in literature or in travellers' tales. On the contrary, death by drowning from Virgil through Dante is normally regarded as a desolate end, and those who suffer it are not at peace until they return to the kindlier element of earth. The words with which Pericles commits Thaisa to the deep acknowledge to the full that desolation:

> A terrible childbed hast thou had, my dear;
> No light, no fire: th'unfriendly elements
> Forgot thee utterly; nor have I time
> To give the hallowed to thy grave, but straight
> Must cast thee, scarcely coffined, in the ooze.

But he transcends that desolation instantly, in an image of quite alien marine beauty:

> Where, for a monument upon thy bones,
> And e'er remaining lamps, the belching whale
> And humming water must o'erwhelm thy corpse,
> Lying with simple shells.[27]

It seems possible, however, that the symbolic seas of romance, together with that medieval lore which determined portrayals of the afterlife both in poetry and painting, were mysteriously fused in Shakespeare's imagination. The coral and pearl of *The Tempest* do not figure in the imagined fate of Thaisa's body, but the jewelled world of the *Gawain*-poet's precious pearl has its presence in the scene where Cerimon recalls Thaisa to life. As Elizabeth Salter

once finely wrote of *Pearl*:

> Only by removing the ground of action from a world which celebrates "whatever is begotten, born and dies", to one in which the revolution of seasons is stilled, and the accident of death precluded, can the poet win for his dreaming self a measure of calm. The contrast is dramatic, as he exchanges his little mundane "paradise garden", with its flowers shining in sunlight, for a land which proclaims itself, in every detail, a heightened and perfected vision of what the senses are accustomed to register.[28]

Precious metals and jewels, the most beautiful and durable of all earth's creations, are the materials from which the *Gawain*-poet, like so many medieval painters, built his recovered garden of earthly delights and his heavenly Jerusalem.

When Thaisa's coffin is opened, Cerimon recognizes that "heightened and perfected vision of what the senses are accustomed to register":

> She is alive; behold,
> Her eyelids, cases to those heavenly jewels
> Which Pericles hath lost, begin to part
> Their fringes of bright gold; the diamonds
> Of a most praiséd water doth appear
> To make the world twice rich.[29]

Thaisa, like the Pearl maiden, is a perfected figure, her being now of gold. But where the Pearl maiden is transformed from a flower in that little mundane garden into an unchanging, imperishable being, Thaisa is retrieved from that perfected image to become again "a flower, shining in sunlight":

> This queen will live; nature awakes; a warmth
> Breathes out of her; she hath not been entranced
> Above five hours; see how she 'gins to blow
> Into life's flower again![30]

Alchemy, that art which seeks to distill the permanent from perishable being and to accelerate the process of its perfection, may have its part to play in both *Pearl* and *Pericles*. Cerimon is skilled in the curative power that "dwells in vegetives, in metals, stones". Where the jeweller of *Pearl* uses his art to transform the mortal child into immortal metals, precious stones, Cerimon employs his to transform the immortalized Thaisa back into the living, perishable flower of earth. It is most unlikely that Shakespeare knew *Pearl*, just as it is unlikely that the poet of *Pearl* knew Dante. But it is not improbable that exceptional imaginations, sharing certain related visual and verbal representations of the afterlife, should have drawn on that communal inheritance in ways that suggest an affinity.

Works of art themselves may have strange burials and still stranger resurrections. It is well known that the single manuscript

of *Pearl*, known only as a catalogue entry through five centuries, survived a major fire though slightly charred to flourish again in nineteenth century England. It is less well known that the house of Sir John Yorke, which saw the second recorded performance of *Pericles*, now lies under an inland water in Nidderdale. *Pericles* and *Pearl* indeed have one further connection, their confidence in the immortality of art. In the Renaissance this confidence is not, of course, unusual. Shakespeare's sonnets, for example, constantly oppose to the mortality of man and the transience of his other works, an art of "eternal lines". Where war will overturn statues, and "sluttish time" besmear "the unswept stone", poetry itself will endure "As long as men can breath or eyes can see".[31] Medieval writers rarely exhibit such confidence. Their manuscript pages, as instanced by the fate of the *Gawain*-poet's, were more vulnerable than stone; there was no print to immortalize them in the eyes of future readers. Their attitude to the artist also differed; the poet was merely the mouthpiece of a tale that had existed before him and would endure after him. But the claim made for art by *Pearl* is for the middle ages unusually firm, where that made by *Pericles* is, for the Renaissance, unusually modest.

Because the flower is mortal, it is not enough for the poet of *Pearl* that his child should flower again within the poem; as she herself reminds him, "that thou lestes was bot a rose / That flowred and fayled as kynde hyt gef".[32] He must create for her a more lasting memorial from his jeweller's craft of metal and precious stone. The poem is lapidary in more senses than one. Its finely wrought texture, with its complex craft and visual brilliance, is the verbal equivalent of the intricate work of the medieval jeweller. To that extent it immortalizes its Pearl. And yet, as Elizabeth Salter also insisted, it remains a poem of loss, lapidary in that other sense of the epitaph carved upon the tombstone, an elegy with an elegiac cadence.

In *Pericles* the unusual modesty of Shakespeare's claim for art is appropriate to its medieval poet, Gower. His Gower is no Prospero, no wonder-worker, the protagonist in his own drama. True to the sentiments of medieval poetry, he is merely a mouthpiece, for a tale of others' making long ago. He claims a renewed life no longer than a candle's, the measure of the play's duration:

> If you, born in these latter times
> When wit's more ripe, accept my rhymes,
> And that to hear an old man sing
> May to your wishes pleasure bring,
> I life would wish, and that I might
> Waste it for you like taper-light.[33]

At the play's end he traces, in the sift of an hour-glass, his return to dust:

> Now our sands are almost run;
> More a little, and then dumb.[34]

His return from ashes is of brief duration; nonetheless it parallels

the great scenes of temporal resurrection in the play; and if his claim for his art is never large, it opens on a prospect of repeated revivals.

NOTES

1 *Macbeth*, I, iii, ll.96-7, 137-8.

2 *Essays*, "Of Death".

3 *The Duchess of Malfi*, IV, ii, ll.153-9.

4 *Henry IV*, Pt. I, V, iv, ll.89-92.

5 *Hamlet*, V, ii, ll.334-5.

6 *Pericles*, I, i.

7 *Ibid*, I, Prologue, ll.5-8.

8 *Ibid*, I, i, ll.41-6.

9 "The Thre Deid Pollis", ll.1-8 (in *Poems*, ed. C. Elliott, Oxford, 1974).

10 *The Pardoner's Tale*, l.683 (in *Works*, ed. F.N. Robinson, 2nd ed., Cambridge, Mass., 1957).

11 *Ibid*, l.700.

12 *Ibid*, ll.530-3, 522-3.

13 Philippians, iii, 21 cf. Philippians, iii, 18 and I Corinthians, vi, 13.

14 *The Parlement of the Thre Ages* (ed. M.Y. Offord, EETS 246, 1959), Thornton MS, ll.290-1.

15 *Pericles*, I, i, ll.27-8, 19-22.

16 *Ibid*, I, i, ll.63-9.

17 *Ibid*, V, i, l.199.

18 *Ibid*, II, ii, ll.48-9.

19 *Ibid*, II, iii, l.35.

20 *Ibid*, IV, vi, ll.79 and 113.

21 *Piers Plowman* (ed. Skeat, Oxford, 1886), B. XVIII ll.338-9.

22 *Ibid*, ll.201-5.

23 *Confessio Amantis*, Bk. VIII, ll.585-90 (in *English Works*, ed. G.C. Macauley, Oxford, 1901).

24 *Pericles*, II, Prologue, ll.33-8.

[25] *Ibid*, III, Prologue, ll.46-50.

[26] *The Golden Legend*, Temple Classics edition, Vol. IV, p.81.

[27] *Pericles*, III, i, ll.56-64.

[28] Derek Pearsall and Elizabeth Salter, *Landscapes and Seasons of the Medieval World* (London, 1973) p.104.

[29] *Pericles*, III, ii, ll.103-8.

[30] *Ibid*, III, ii, ll.98-101.

[31] Sonnets 18 and 55.

[32] *Pearl*, ll.269-70 (ed. A.C. Cawley and J.J. Anderson, London, 1976).

[33] *Pericles*, I, Prologue, ll.10-16.

[34] *Ibid*, V, ii, ll.1-2.

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